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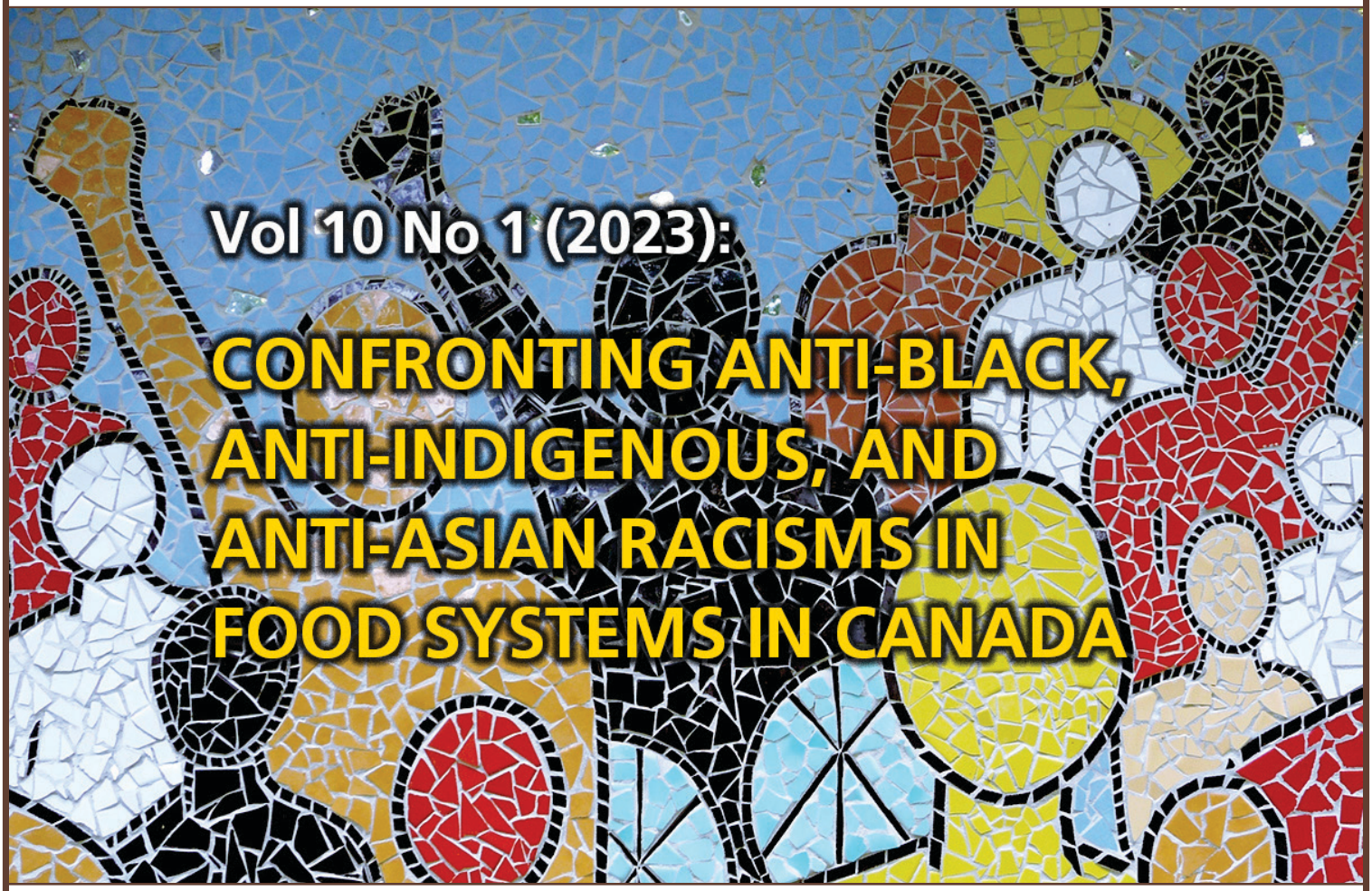

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CONFRONTING ANTI-BLACK, ANTI-INDIGENOUS, AND ANTI-ASIAN RACISMS IN FOOD SYSTEMS IN CANADA

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IN THIS ISSUE

The impetus for this themed section came out of the broader reckoning that touched off in the summer of 2020 in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. The Canadian Association for Food Studies board, like so many organizations struggling to respond to such brazen violence, released a statement on racialized police violence and systemic racism. In the statement the CAFS board commits to more deliberately centering the work of anti-racism in our association—and this included two shorter-term projects. Curating and publishing an open access resource list on food and racism in so-called Canada, and publishing a themed section on racism in the food system. This last is now available for reading and was edited by Leticia Ama Deawuo and collaborative assistant, Michael Classens.

This issue also contains a Perspective on the complex realities of food in federal prison, Original Research Articles on such topics as diverse as traditional food access in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia), a sugar-sweetened beverage tax in Manitoba, dietary messaging in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, and understandings of what it means to be a "good farmer" producing "good food" for communities. Not to mention a Book Review of Rick *Blom's Hunger: How food shaped the course of the First World War*, and a film review of Suzanne Crocker's *First we eat: Food sovereignty north of 60*.

guest editor: Leticia Ama Deawuo

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Editorial

"Confronting Anti-Black, Anti-Indigenous, and Anti-Asian Racisms in Food Systems in Canada."

Leticia Ama Deawuo [a*] and Michael Classens[b]

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The impetus for this themed section came out of the broader reckoning that touched off in the summer of 2020 in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. The Canadian Association for Food Studies board, like so many organizations struggling to respond to such brazen violence, released a statement on racialized police violence and systemic racism. In the statement the CAFS board commits to more deliberately centering the work of anti-racism in our association—and this included two shorter-term projects. Curating and publishing an open access resource list on food and racism in so-called Canada, and publishing a themed section on racism in the food system. The CFP for the special issue was released the following May, 2021, and read in part "As we reckon with the ways white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy and colonization has shaped food systems, we must also reflect on and redress dominant modes of thought and approaches that reproduce inequity within the academy (e.g., research and teaching) and society at large. As such, we welcome submissions that centre diverse ways of knowing and methods of knowledge production."

Over the past nearly two years, we (the special issue guest editor, Ama, and collaboration assistant, Michael) have met virtually many times to discuss the CFP, the process, the articles, and the broader backdrop of white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism. And as we reflected on how we wanted to write this editorial, it occurred to us that our own approach to collaboration on this project has been *relational, conversational*. So, rather than writing a conventional editorial, we once again met virtually to reflect on some key themes that

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(re)emerged over the past couple of years. What follows is part of that conversation, edited for clarity and brevity. We hope this special issue contributes to keeping the conversations (and action) focused on structural change going.

Michael -Over the past couple of years that we've met to talk about all these issues, I wonder if you can reflect on the ways that the articles articulate and realize the commitments and values intended for this special section?

Ama - I have been pondering this question , more so around the response from CAFS. With the murder of George Floyd, there's been a lot of response from different organisations that are showing their commitment to tackling anti-Black racism, and their commitment to evaluating their policies and procedures. For me, around that particular time, it felt like 'here we go again', talking about anti-Black racism is very hot right now but there will be no follow-through and no follow-up. My identity as a Black person and as a Black woman is realized now but after that, all of it is going to be forgotten, in one way or another. Especially when the analysis does not include class. George Floyd was murdered not only because he was black but also because he was a poor black man.

When this special issue came about, my main thinking was around the question, how do we make sure that the voices of low-income Black and Indigenous people who are on the ground doing this work get centred? How do we centre the issues and the challenges as part of our ongoing dialogue, and ongoing conversations around food systems?

As I've said before, you cannot talk about food and food systems' work without talking about racial justice. They are all key pieces of this work, because of the fact that the stewards of this land in so-called Canada, are the Indigenous peoples who are still stewarding these lands and have for many, many generations. Also, we have to think about the folks that were brought here, through the Atlantic slave trade, whose bodies were exploited and who are also stewards of the land.

So, the backbone of our food system is really on the backs of these folks. In terms of this special issue, my piece was centred around how CAFS can really focus on embedding this in the long term, and I was happy to see that CAFS worked on a strategy. Of course, strategies can be tweaked, critiqued and made better over time and no system is ever perfect. But how do we really make sure that these voices from the community, from the folks most impacted, and from the folks who are doing the work, can be part of the dialogue and can also be seen as experts and knowledge holders in this work? At times, the experts come from academia who write fancy language, but how do we really make sure that the Indigenous field knowledge that is being brought to the table is also valued for its expertise and experience.

Michael - Based on the conversations that we had over the last two years, I'm thinking that, while this is a food journal, food didn't always come up. What is your opinion on why that is? You touched on it a bit, but maybe if you can just elaborate more.

Ama - I think it's because food issues are not always about food. The issues are very interlinked. I remember we touched on mental health and challenges of burnout. The number of requests that may come in for speaking engagements coupled with the lack of resources that are available to support this work, and the mental health pieces, are all associated with issues of food justice and food sovereignty. These issues don't exist in a vacuum as they are all very much interlinked. As I worked and learned, there is also the understanding

of the interconnectedness of all of these issues to each other and how they impact each other in many ways.

Michael - To some extent, the issue of interconnected barriers is reflected in many submissions we got, integrated barriers that systematically remove people from these spaces, as in, the journal spaces. We know that BIPOC people are systematically removed from academic spaces of all disciplines before they even have an opportunity to publish in the first place. As we commit to addressing these issues more substantively going forward, what might a journal that removes those barriers look like?

Ama - A key piece to flag is that we were doing this work in the middle of a pandemic. People's anxiety, depression, and worries were at an all-time high and people were literally trying to survive physically and mentally. I remember some folks wanted to submit an article but it was very difficult for them to even pull it together in the timeline given.

The other piece is around the journal format. Who are we trying to reach? What measures are we taking to reach them where they're at? What resources are available to make sure that we're reaching these people? What support systems are there to support folks in the writing process? What counts as 'academic' writing, and how can we support expanding what is taken seriously as 'scholarship'?

For example, I come from a background of oral storytelling. My people pass on knowledge and history to each other through oral storytelling—we value oral storytelling as expert knowledge and as a centrally important way that knowledge is transferred. What other ways can knowledge, from all these amazing folks doing work, be supported and be shared? Is writing journals, essays, or articles the only way to do it?

Michael - This is great advice for the journal and for the association. I have a couple more things that follow up on this to some extent. We all have different positionalities in the context of academic institutions. What would you say if there's a tenured faculty member reading this special issue? What would you say to them in terms of the ways they can start making the kinds of systemic change that you're talking about?

Ama - It's constantly pushing back on the current systems within these institutions. I remember when I was a first-year student, you get into class, and you're given these books, you realize very quickly that there's a particular language, the academic language. There's a particular way that people talk and use words, and it's quite easy for you to develop impostor syndrome. You feel like an imposter within these spaces. A friend of mine once pointed out that what happens on the ground actually informs academia. Academia writes about the work that the community is doing. It doesn't mean academia is directing what happens in life, it just documents what's happening on the ground and in life.

It is very important for professors to not necessarily think about how to make room for Black students, or how to make room for Indigenous students. It's about how do I create an inclusive school environment that supports everyone's needs, that supports different ways of sharing knowledge? An environment that also values diverse knowledge. We mark students on their grammar, on how well they've been able to articulate, and put all these fancy words and things together. But what is the substance of that work? What is the understanding of the issues that they are actually trying to pull together? And what systems are you putting in place? That in itself is not on just one professor. What systems exist within that institution to support these students in order to do their best work? I think those are all important considerations to think about. We can

never reform a broken system. We must dream of a world and be bold enough to try it.

Michael - Initially I wanted to ask, what would you say to a young, racialized student who's reading this, however, I want to reframe that because you just talked about your experience as a first-year undergrad. What would you tell yourself about this special issue or just about academia in general? Given where you are now, you've got your master's degree and you've been a long-time activist, and you're a leader in this space, what would you tell your younger self and how would you introduce this work to your younger self?

Ama -
This is not the only space or format to share knowledge. We can craft our own path.

If my younger self was looking at this issue, she would realize that it's possible. That the knowledge, the experience, and the skill set that I bring is also valued. I think it's very easy to look at this as "Oh, I could never do that." Or think that the knowledge and the experience that I have is something no one wants to hear. What I have to say is not important. But it is and I think we all have very important contributions to make.

Sadly, we live in a society where some folks are considered experts, and others are not. We need to really think about what we mean by "expertise", and where do these types of terminologies come from? Because if you look at a lot of Indigenous communities globally, the word expert is not what they use to describe knowledge holders within their community. We need to recognize Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of sharing and transferring knowledge.

Michael - Is there anything else that you want to add?

Ama - I've met a lot of really amazing professors who are bending the rules to support their students, to help them navigate the bureaucratic world of academia. They understand the issues, the institutions we're in, and find ways to really support folks.

What I would ask is, how can that one professor also support a systemic change? So that the professor bending the rules to support is not an exception, but a rule that the institution as a whole adopts. I think that the more these institutions can create an environment that allows for different ways of learning and different ways of knowledge sharing, the better I think it is for all of society.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank the contributors for so generously sharing their work. Thanks also to the CFS staff, without whom this themed section would not be possible. Thanks also to Farwa Arshad for transcribing the discussion between Ama and Michael.

Leticia Ama Deawuo. Before joining SeedChange as executive director in 2021, Ama spent fifteen years as a leading activist for food sovereignty and food justice, and four years as the Executive Director of Black Creek Community Farm, where she worked towards greater food justice with the Toronto community of Jane-Finch. She was instrumental in the creation of a number of initiatives in Toronto, including Jane Finch On The Move, Jane Finch Action Against Poverty, Jane Finch Political Conversation Café, Black Creek Food Justice Network, and Mothers-In-Motion. Ama recently completed a Master's Degree at York University, looking at how decolonization, agroecology, and the expertise of women elders in small-scale farming communities can support much-needed shifts in the way we think of our relationships with each other and with other living beings.

Michael Classens is a white settler, cisgender man and Assistant Professor in the School of the Environment at University of Toronto. He is broadly interested in areas of social and environmental justice, with an emphasis on these dynamics within food systems. As a teacher, researcher, learner, and activist he is committed to connecting theory with practice, and scholarship with socio-ecological change. Michael lives in Toronto with his partner, three kids, and dog named Sue.

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Commentary

Racism, traditional food access, and industrial development across Ontario: Perspectives from the fields of environmental law and environmental studies

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Abstract

Racism and industrial development across lands and waters in the province of Ontario have played a significant role in decreased access to traditional food for Indigenous peoples. Traditional food access is important for health reasons, as well as cultural and spiritual wellness, and its loss has dire consequences for both people and the environment. In this commentary, we bring together our practices and experiences as settler Canadians in the fields of environmental law and environmental studies to share three short case studies exploring the linkages among traditional food access, racism, and industrial development. Specifically, we discuss how the aerial spraying of forests, mining exploration, and contaminants in fish are impacting traditional food access, and analyze how industry and monetary gains are drivers in these scenarios. For each of these case studies, we provide examples of research and advocacy from our respective fields carried out with Indigenous communities. We conclude by offering our insights for addressing systemic racism in food systems, focusing on a need for policy to prioritize Indigenous sovereignty and rights and opportunities for collaboration spanning different areas of practice and Western and Indigenous knowledge systems.

Keywords: Environmental racism; traditional foods; food sovereignty; Indigenous rights; food security; reconciliation

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Résumé

Le racisme et le développement industriel sur les terres et dans les eaux de l'Ontario ont joué un rôle considérable dans la diminution de l'accès à la nourriture traditionnelle pour les peuples autochtones. Or, cet accès est important pour des raisons de santé de même que pour le bien-être culturel et spirituel; cette perte a des conséquences désastreuses pour les personnes et pour l'environnement. Dans ce texte, nous réunissons nos expériences et nos pratiques en tant que personnes canadiennes allochtones dans les champs du droit de l'environnement et des études environnementales pour partager trois courtes études de cas qui explorent les liens entre l'accès à la nourriture traditionnelle, le racisme et le développement industriel. Plus précisément, nous discutons les répercussions de la pulvérisation aérienne des forêts, de l'exploration minière et de la contamination des poissons sur l'accès à la nourriture traditionnelle, et nous analysons comment l'industrie et l'appât du gain sont en cause dans ces scénarios. Pour chacune de ces études de cas, nous fournissons des exemples de recherche et d'argumentation menées avec des communautés autochtones dans nos champs respectifs. Nous concluons avec nos suggestions sur la manière de s'attaquer au racisme systémique dans les systèmes alimentaires, en se concentrant sur la nécessité d'instaurer des politiques qui mettent de l'avant la souveraineté et les droits des Autochtones, en plus de susciter la collaboration entre différents domaines de pratique et entre les systèmes de savoir occidentaux et autochtones.

Introduction

Racism is woven into systemic injustices in food systems. This is especially clear in the context of settler colonialism and ongoing food injustice among Indigenous peoples in Canada. The authors of this commentary are settler Canadians engaged in community-based research, outreach, and legal advocacy with Indigenous communities within our respective fields of environmental studies and environmental law. Jane Cooper is a law student at the University of Toronto, working towards a career in environmental justice and law, and a trained bioethicist. Kristen Lowitt is a faculty member in the School of Environmental Studies at Queen's University whose research focusses on sustainable food systems and natural resource governance. Kerrie Blaise is an environmental lawyer practicing in Northern Ontario and a former staff lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), a non-profit legal aid clinic.

In this commentary we bring together our interdisciplinary practices and experiences, alongside guest contributions from Dr. Sue Bell Chiblow and Michel Koostachin, to share three short case studies examining the linkages among traditional food access, racism, and industrial development across the lands and waters in the province of Ontario. Specifically, we discuss how aerial spraying of forests, mining exploration, and contaminants in fish are impacting traditional food access, and we analyze how industry and monetary gains are drivers in these scenarios. For each of these case studies, we provide examples of research and advocacy from our respective fields carried out in partnership with Indigenous communities. We conclude

by presenting our insights for scholars and practitioners working at the interface of racism, industry, and settler colonialism in food systems, focusing on the importance of policy for prioritizing Indigenous sovereignty and rights and opportunities for collaboration spanning different areas of practice and Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.

We understand environmental racism by drawing on the work of Robert Bullard (1994), who defines this as "any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color" (p.1037). Environmental racism is a type of systemic racism that explicitly recognizes how racialized and minority groups bear the burden of environmental degradation (MacDonald, 2020).

In Canada, environmental racism is inseparable from settler colonialism and capitalism which have dispossessed Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters. These injustices are especially apparent in food systems today, with Indigenous peoples much more likely than white Canadians to be food insecure (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). The root causes of these inequities remain unaddressed and include the forceful uprooting of First Nations from their lands and onto reserves. In many instances, insufficient access to traditional, culturally appropriate, and nutritious foods persists. Our short case studies that follow illustrate the linkages among racism, industrial development, and traditional food access across Ontario today, and specifically highlight how the colonial origins of extractivism in the sectors of forestry, mining, and fisheries continue to impede traditional food access, and how communities are taking action.

A pattern of discrimination: Three short case studies

Aerial spraying of forests – written with Dr. Susan Bell Chiblow

Every summer, vast expanses of boreal and conifer forests in Northern Ontario are sprayed by an aerosol defoliant known as glyphosate. Glyphosate is valued in the forestry sector because it substantially reduces understory vegetation and stunts the regrowth of deciduous trees in recently harvested areas. This allows more lucrative, timber-valued conifer species to dominate. This practice comes at a cost to both humans and the land: glyphosate is classified as a Group 2a carcinogen (a substance that likely causes cancer in humans) by the World Health Organization (2015). The removal of understory vegetation reduces the availability of traditional food sources for First Nations, due to the reduction of both edible plant species and the ungulates (such as deer and moose) that rely on them.

Glyphosate spraying remains an annual occurrence in Northern Ontario despite longstanding calls for a moratorium on the practice from Indigenous groups and First Nations. In 2014, the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Elders were the first to declare such a moratorium, outlining their dependence "socially, economically and culturally" on the health of the forests and glyphosate's interference with their Treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather (TEK Elders, 2014).

Susan Chiblow is an Anishinaabe Kwe from Garden River First Nation who volunteers with the TEK Elders of the Robinson Huron Treaty territory. She has made clear that, "as Elder Ray Owl of the TEK Elders said to me, if it [glyphosate] hurts one blade of grass, it can't be used." As she explains, herbicides easily find their way into water sources, affecting species in the area. When the population of one species begins to decline, there is a domino effect in the community, and the risks to the cultural values and practices of First Nations—from language and ceremony to food and medicine—are immeasurable. Despite demonstrations and correspondence with governments to find alternatives to herbicides, the government response remains "all smoke and mirrors," Chiblow says.

The leadership of the TEK Elders is discussed in Kerrie and Jane's work with CELA in the recently released report, Making the Links: A Toolkit for Environmental Protection, Health and Equity (CELA, 2022).Among the issues profiled in the report is the matter of provincial forest management practices and how these continue to undercut conservation, wherein timber profits trump Indigenous rights and land protection. CELA also held a strategic briefing for lawyers and activists who want to assist with efforts to end glyphosate spraying (CELA, 2019, Jan 31).

The "Ring of Fire" - written with Michel Koostachin

Another example comes from the Hudson and James Bay Lowlands, homelands for the Omushkego First Nations and the world's second largest intact peatland. Thousands of approved and pending claims for mining exploration exist in this region, with the aim of developing mines in an area dubbed the "Ring of Fire." Together, these claims represent a high likelihood of cumulative environmental, cultural, and social impacts to the land, water and to Indigenous peoples. This region in Treaty 9 has been maintained for millennia by Indigenous people now living in thirty-five communities. The values and futures of these First Nations and their community members are tied to the land through food networks, medicine, cultural, social, and sacred practices, and responsibilities. These communities both sustain and depend on the area's extensive ecological systems, including intact river systems, abundant fish and wildlife, and globally significant wetland and forest systems.

The Indigenous-led advocacy group Friends of the Attawapiskat River ("the Friends"), is a grassroots group formed in response to concerns regarding the proposed Ring of Fire developments. Specifically, the communities living downstream of the region do not have an adequate level of access to information, and their concerns are not being meaningfully considered in the consultation processes.

As Friends member Michel Koostachin explains, a history of government apathy toward community concerns is a barrier to their participation in environmental consultations: "People don't want to be bothered by what is coming ahead because they are tired of being lied to and they are tired by the lack of transparency" (Mutis, 2020). As another member shared in a public comment as part of a federal Impact Assessment process, the region is "where community members go to harvest food and trees to make shelter, and follow the wildlife, as it migrates and travels along the water" (Friends of the Attawapiskat River, 2020, Jan 28). Community members acknowledge the irreparable changes that mining would bring to the ability of First Nation members to practice traditional food harvesting.

Reconciliation demands the courage to reform environmental laws—such as the *Impact Assessment Act*—which are prefaced on the Crown legal traditions that are yet to recognize Indigenous jurisdiction for

decision-making. Timelines under the *Act* are also proponent led, meaning Indigenous nations and the public do not have an ability to 'start' or 'stop' statutory timelines for the various stages within the Impact Assessment process.

Kerrie works with the Friends, who remain active in calling for the upholding of Treaty promises and Indigenous rights, as their legal advisor. In early 2021, the Friends called for a moratorium on all mineral exploration, proposed road projects, and other developments in the Ring of Fire until human rights to food, clean water, housing, health, and other services are upheld (Friends of the Attawapiskat River, n.d.) and in 2022, launched a petition demanding project assessments be Indigenous-led (Baiguzhiyeva, 2022, Jan 14).. As Koostachin shared, "the resolution of decades of inadequate housing and contaminated drinking water cannot be resolved through the further exploits of our lands and resources absent our full, informed, and equal participation."

Contaminants in Great Lakes fisheries

Our final example involves the Great Lakes region spanning from Southern Ontario to the far reaches of Lake Superior. For Indigenous people of this region, fishing has been tied to cultures, livelihoods, and sustenance since time immemorial. However, the Great Lakes are surrounded by high levels of industrial activity that releases toxic chemicals into the air and water; this includes per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as "forever chemicals" due to their persistence in the environment (Murray & Jackson, 2021; Roddy & McNeil, 2021). This has led to limits being imposed on the consumption of some Great Lakes fish species while also resulting in the loss of fishing opportunities. As Gagnon et al. (2018) explained, "contamination intrudes upon and erodes" (p.7) Indigenous fishing practices and Treaty rights to fish.

Kristen is currently working on a research project with Batchewana First Nation (BFN) on eastern Lake Superior about fisheries and food sovereignty in their territory. While not specific to contaminants, the project seeks to support BFN in upholding their inherent rights and responsibilities to protect the water and fisheries. Based in narrative interviews with fishers, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers, a documentary film is being created as a tool for the community to share their stories and knowledge about the Lake's fisheries, food systems, and their sustainability. As Chief Dean Sayers of BFN has previously explained, "the Great Lakes are the heart of Turtle Island [North America] and the condition of Turtle Island is dependent on the condition of the Great Lakes. We as Anishinaabe and Ojibway people have a tremendous responsibility to protect that water" (cited in Lowitt et al., 2020, pg.3).

Conclusion

Our case studies collectively illustrate how industrial development burdens Indigenous communities and their cultures, livelihoods, and food systems, which are dependent upon the health of the fish, forests, and land. Profits from industry continue to take precedence over the legal rights and health of Indigenous people, despite evidence from both Indigenous knowledge and Western science attesting to the impacts of environmental degradation. Our cases highlight how Indigenous peoples are not only dealing with the inequitable distribution of environmental problems (for example, the impact of aerial spraying on

traditional food sources), but also with the procedural aspects of environmental racism, including a lack of respect for Indigenous sovereignty and the upholding of Treaty rights.

As settler Canadians working in the fields of environmental law and environmental studies, we have responsibilities to support communities in addressing food and environmental inequities, especially when Indigenous communities invite us to work with them, as they have in the cases we have shared here. Drawing on our different backgrounds, we believe there are considerable opportunities for community-based scholarship and legal advocacy to come together to amplify efforts by Indigenous communities in addressing racism and food injustice. For example, while community-based research can help generate an understanding of place-based food system issues and document Indigenous knowledge (as in our fisheries example with Batchewana First Nation), legal outreach and advocacy can help ensure that communities' voices are heard within policy forums, which remain dominated by Crown and private interests (as in our examples on aerial spraying and mining). Together, the fields of environmental law and environmental studies can also help elevate Indigenous peoples' own systems of governance, jurisdiction, culture, and food. Support for Indigenous law and legal traditions is recognized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and is specifically reflected in the Calls to Action numbers fifty to fifty-two (Government of Canada, 2019). Furthermore, for the fields of law and academia, which are colonial institutions, the TRC asks that we repudiate the concepts that have been used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and people, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius (Call to Action number forty-seven).

Moving forward, there is a pressing need to question Crown-based assumptions of authority over lands and waters so that we can use integrated knowledge (i.e., Two-Eyed Seeing) and uphold the principles of free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous nations as instilled and recognized by the United Nations Declarations on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007). These actions are imperative to addressing systemic racial injustices in food systems, and they require dedicated support from practitioners in the fields of environmental law and environmental studies.

Acknowledgements: We sincerely thank the time and effort of all the individuals and partners that contributed to the projects and case studies we feature in this Commentary as well as recognize their ongoing leadership in the areas of food and environmental justice.

Kerrie Blaise is a settler, environmental lawyer whose Northern Ontario law practice centres on environmental rights and Indigenous justice. She isa former staff lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), a non-profit legal aid clinic.

Jane Cooper is a third-year law student at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. Prior to law school, she completed a Master of Bioethics at Harvard Medical School, and a Bachelor of Science from Queen's University. She has published in the areas of bioethics, justice, and the environment, and plans on practicing environmental and human rights law. Beginning in August, she will serve as a judicial clerk for the Superior Court of Ontario.

Kristen Lowitt is a faculty member in the School of Environmental Studies at Queen's University. Her research program is directed towards working with communities to build just and sustainable food systems with a focus on rural and coastal settings.

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Field Report

Field notes from RAIR: Putting relational accountability into practice

The RAIR Collective

Danielle Boissoneau (Anishinaabe); Terran Giacomini (settler); Ayla Fenton (settler); Lauren Kepkiewicz (settler); Adrianne Lickers Xavier (Onondaga); Sarah Rotz (settler).

Abstract

In this article we explore our research as a collective of Indigenous and settler academics, food providers, and community-based organizers, including how we came together over several plates of nachos and a shared vision of deepening our relationships to land rooted in (non)(de)(anti)colonial and feminist perspectives. In this commentary, we articulate what research based in relational accountability looks like for us, including the challenges and practices we have come across as we strive to make our work possible as a collective, and navigate a rather complex relationship with academia. We suggest this work of relational accountability might be considered 'field work' or 'feels work' as some of our members refer to it.

Keywords: Methods; anti-colonial research; feminist methodology; food sovereignty; relational accountability; Indigenous-settler relationships

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Résumé

Dans cet article, nous explorons notre démarche en tant que collectif de chercheuses autochtones et allochtones, fournisseuses alimentaires et organisatrices communautaires, incluant la manière dont nous avons été rassemblées autour de nombreuses assiettes de nachos et d'une vision partagée quant à l'approfondissement de nos relations à la terre dans une perspective (non)(dé)(anti)coloniale et féministe. Nous exprimons ce que nous paraît être la recherche basée sur la responsabilité relationnelle, incluant les défis et les pratiques que nous avons rencontrés en luttant pour rendre possible notre travail en tant que collectif et évoluer dans une relation plutôt complexe avec le milieu universitaire. Nous proposons que ce travail de responsabilité relationnelle puisse être envisagé comme un « travail de terrain » ou « travail de senti », selon l'expression de quelques-unes de nos membres.

Introduction

In the fall of 2019, we came together around a plateful of nachos to share our visions for doing research and political work together. We met as a group of Indigenous and settler academics, food providers and community-based organizers wanting to deepen our relationships to land from (non)(de)(anti)colonial and feminist perspectives. This work was and is personal. At this initial gathering we spoke of ways to centre trust and what relational accountability to one another and the communities we seek to support might look like in practice.[1] This initial encounter was the beginning of a long-term collective process of relational work. Our collective is focused on research, but more than that, we strive to practice good relations with one another. This has required trust, friendship, vulnerability, mutual support, guidance and accountability, and involved several mistakes and missteps along the way.

As a collective of Indigenous and white settler people, we seek to practice and more deeply understand what it looks and feels like to honour our relations. We seek to centre relationality with the land and each other. In doing this work, we hope to better understand what grassroots rematriation and (re)connection to land could look and feel like.[2] In this piece, we articulate what research based in relational accountability means to us, including the challenges and practices we have come across as we strive to make our work possible, and navigate a complex relationship with academia. We suggest that this work of relational accountability is a form of 'field work'–or 'feels work' as some of our members refer to it. Given the harmful history of

[1] Renee Pualani Louis (2007) explains that relational accountability "implies that all parts of the research process are related, from inspiration to expiration, and that the research is not just responsible for nurturing and maintaining this relationship but is also accountable to 'all your relations'" (p. 133).

[2] Our focus on rematriation is rooted in our commitment to supporting Indigenous nations in the "reclaiming of ancestral remains, spirituality, culture, knowledge and resources" (Bernedette Muthien in LaDuke & Cowen, 2020, p. 260). This commitment is rooted in the understanding of rematriation as an Indigenous process meaning: "back to Mother Earth, a return to our origins, to life and co-creation, rather than patriarchal destruction and colonization, a reclamation of germination." (ibid).

Western research for Indigenous, non-white, and non-western communities, we consider the ways that relational accountability and 'feels work' may take the place of conventional notions and practices of field work (Smith, 2012) and even 'productive work/labour' more generally.

Within our research, we strive to contribute to the growing dialogue and action for Indigenous land rematriation and food sovereignty (e.g., Morrison, 2011). Both theoretically and methodologically, we aim to centre Indigenous women and two-spirit knowledges, experiences and relationships to land as we simultaneously bring interested food provisioners into dialogue and build solidarity between settler and Indigenous peoples.

Putting the vision into practice

While our vision seemed clear in theory, putting these ideas into practice has been messy and uncomfortable. To date, RAIR has held a virtual 'encounter' workshop to discuss themes of land rematriation and has created a podcast series that discusses Indigenous rematriation and food sovereignty. The project was originally centred around land-based in-person encounters that use participatory observation, audio/video recordings, and Photovoice to explore the ways that encounter participants (comprised of settler and Indigenous farmers as well as land and food sovereignty activists) relate to one another across Indigenous and settler colonial hierarchies.[3]

Encounters are rooted in a social movement approach to knowledge creation that build dialogue between equal partners and relationships across difference (Holt- Giménez, 1996). Encounters have two core parts: (i) Collaborative meetings that focus on political topics and encourage participants to understand their power and reclaim it. (ii) Collective work performing daily tasks and movement building (e.g., food preparation, gardening, cleaning). Encounters are a core part of our critical feminist methodology as doing reproductive work together highlights our goals of equity and mutual care. Rather than assuming a singular reality or model of knowledge creation, feminists show us that all knowledges are situated within unique histories, lived experiences and social positions.

COVID-19 forced us to re-imagine how we practice some of these methodologies, including seeking new ways to care for one another and maintain key components of the encounters. Our group dynamics and responsibilities changed based on shifting capacities and resource constraints, including completing doctoral work, juggling multiple jobs, starting new jobs, taking on caregiving responsibilities, community obligations, as well as the emotional and physical impacts felt by many, especially women and femmes. Tensions and limitations arose from working within academic structures, communicating from a distance over Zoom, as well as the uneven and limited capacity that comes from broader structures of oppression. While we are heartened by our collective vision, in practice the work

[3] Encounter participants include RAIR collective, members from our partner the National Farmers Union and invited guests working on Indigenous rematriation and food sovereignty.

has been difficult to hold and manage. This doesn't reduce our vision, rather, it grounds it in community and the beautiful complexity that is life.

While common in discussions about community-based research, we have come to realize how much time, communication, and reflection is required when doing relational research. Much of our work so far has centered on internal processes of accountability and trust-building across our different positionalities (which are not assumed to be commensurate). We often talk about how relational communication makes up much of "the work" itself. While we have experienced some benefits of staying in place, the lack of in-person meetings has made this complex work more difficult, including bringing new people on board and broadening relationships with other collectives.

As Steigman and Castleden (2015) describe in their reflections on institutional ethics, doing research in a good way at times seems to be *despite,* not *because of,* institutional protocols and structures. Within our work we have found that restrictions relating to grant administration as well as differing ethics approval processes have presented some challenges. For example, the structure of the grant we hold means we are unable to use the grant's funds to pay those listed as collaborators. We are aware of the contradiction of our situation where members who are in more stable academic paid positions are compensated for their time on this project (e.g., through their salaries from their academic institutions) whereas those in non-academic and/or more precarious positions (including graduate students) contribute their labour for free. This disparity reproduces broader inequities related to western academic research that privilege certain types of knowledge (including the labour that is attached to it) and make it difficult to do transformative work that centres those who are marginalized.

These, and other experiences have shown us how impactful research institutions can be in supporting or hindering relational research, as there must be flexibility to change research based on the priorities and interests of those involved. While we are aware that none of these issues are new, we feel it is important to point to the ways that certain institutional processes can discourage relational research.

What does it mean to be part of a collective attempting to practice relational accountability?

Broadly speaking, we seek to carve a path toward transformation that is rooted in dismantling settler colonial, patriarchal and capitalist logics. This starts with attending to our relations and practicing kinship building. Kinship is described by Kyle Whyte (2020, following Kim TallBear, Zoe Todd and Robin Wall Kimmerer) as "qualities of the relationships we have with others—whether others are humans, plants, animals, fishes, insects, rocks, waterways, or forests." (p. 267). Relational accountability is grounded in the principle that all beings are related, and that, therefore, "we need to critically consider the dynamics of our relationships (established through this work) and who holds responsibility for various project components in these relationships" (Reich et al., 2017, p. 2). In this way, relational accountability may offer a path toward kinship building in research. Reframing the popular argument that the work is not to 'save' the earth, but

instead to transform ourselves from a kinship and relational perspective means we have obligations to think, feel and act in radically different ways together. And, further, to reflect on the specificity of our words and behaviours, and to consider how our research is interwoven with everyday relations with one another, other-than-human-beings, and the land.

In our discussions, we speak about solidarity 'in-the-making', and how this shapes our understanding of research. We recognize that relational research requires us to deepen our relationships with land and one another. In this sense, we are also part of the research. The work of relational accountability is field work/feels work that includes everyday interactions of building relationships with one another. For example, we have had to embrace the importance of small acts of relationship building as a result of COVID-19 restrictions including laughter and jokes (e.g., zoom filters anyone?), virtual personal check-ins (e.g., creating space for sharing things not usually shared in 'professional' settings), and being honest about our capacity and where we're at (e.g., supporting folx when they need time away from the project). The specificity of our relational work guides us in seeking bigger-picture questions of justice, care and rematriation.

On the other hand, those of us who inhabit white settler positionalities are aware of the ease with which we can slip into focusing on ourselves in ways that re-center whiteness rather than using the idea of 'our relationships as the field' to break down entrenched ideas of who we are and what is research. Working together without ignoring how we are different is crucial (Mohanty, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012). For us, this includes—but is not limited to—our complicity in structures of oppression, made up of the messy knots of everyday interactions with one another and the land. Each of us comes to this collective having engaged in personal learning, including reading, reflection, and discussion with close friends and allies about the power relations that shape our lives.[4] In working through the specificity of our relationality before entering into this collective, we believe we are better prepared to do the kind of ongoing learning, and action that this work requires.

By reflecting on our internalized racism, sexism, and colonialism we can draw on this language and hold each other to account with care.[5] For us, accountability and care are necessary components of trust-building. This can look like smaller group check-ins between settler collective members to discuss feelings of discomfort. It can also look like one-on-one check-ins over the phone or via email that make us feel seen and heard—whether as fellow parents, community organizers or long acquainted friends. The internal and relational work that pushes back against racist, colonial, patriarchal, and imperialistic values is a life-long living practice rather than a static event. Accountable researchers and organizers ought to strive to maintain such a practice, because without consistent practice and care, it's easy to lose sight of our differences.

We offer our perspectives of accountability, responsibility, and transformation below, which have been central to our work.

[4] The need for self-education—particularly for settlers—has been underlined by many (e.g., Canon, 2012; Corntassel & Gaudry, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012)

[5] This practice of critical self-reflexivity includes "the active and ongoing analysis of how positionality and ideology are shaping decisions, relationships, and interpretations, rather than the static formulaic declaration of who we are or what we believe" (Strega & Brown, 2015, p. 9). Feminist and Indigenous scholars have highlighted the importance of going beyond reflexivity to connect to a broader agenda that demands structural change (e.g., Kobayashi, 2003; Nagar, 2002) as well as the necessity of positioning self in relation to and within research (e.g., Absolon & Willet, 2005; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

Accountability

We have found that our relationships are best supported through practices of personal, and political responsibility and reflexivity. We strive to remind ourselves and one another to ask: How can we show up for ourselves and each other? How can I learn from this situation and deepen my understanding? How can I respond with integrity, with a good mind, and in the interest of myself and others? We try to show up for one another in everyday ways that matter, for example, by gathering and sending words of care to one another during difficult times.

Responsibility

To be responsible for our actions, we inquire into the ways in which we have been socialized to reproduce hierarchical power relations that cause harm. We work to better understand how we relate to ourselves, our collective, our communities and the land. In many ways we see scholarly 'field work' as 'feels work' because it requires awareness of—and care for—our emotional landscape, as individuals and a collective. We have found that this can enhance our relationship in light of our differences, not in spite of them. In practice, this shows up in personal and collective communications—through the questions we pose to inquire about our intentions and priorities, how we are taking responsibility for and/or care of our needs, and what specific barriers arise or supports we may need.

Transformation

We recognize that transformative relationships are guided by ancestral knowledge and fuelled by accountability and acts of love. We use consensus and other tools to move toward mutual understanding. This means that decisions can take more than a quick yes or no. At the same time, we understand that part of our responsibility is to not get stuck in this process but to make decisions that result in action—and in particular the transfer of resources we have within the collective to Indigenous peoples who are doing, teaching, and learning about land rematriation. We believe that transformation necessitates on-the-ground actions that challenge relations of oppression while affirming Indigenous sovereignty and land rematriation.

How might this approach work across academia (or does it)?

We don't think we can claim to be doing decolonization research if, as Tuck and Yang (2012) describe, decolonization requires the return of land to sovereign Indigenous nations, abolition of contemporary slavery, and the dismantling of the imperial metropole. What, then, can we claim to be doing? For our collective, we're exploring relational accountability alongside anti—and some may describe it as de—colonial land relations through concepts such as rematriation. This process helps us learn more deeply about connections between land relations, coloniality, Indigenous worldviews, and (anti)(de)colonial imaginaries—we understand that this is vastly different than *doing* these things. For us, the doing has meant slowing down our scholarship by prioritizing collaborative decision-making, mutual support, and

reflection, all of which take time, resources, and energy. We began by digging deep within ourselves and with one another around our motives, feelings, and behaviours. Once we developed a degree of shared trust, we began slowly reaching out to the many wise women and LGBTQ2S folks that we wanted to build relationships with.

Following Liboiron's reflections on their research practice in *Pollution is Colonialism* (2021), we believe researchers must make a clear distinction between Indigenous, decolonial, and anticolonial research, and specify which frameworks we can ethically and pragmatically identify with. Indigenous research is "research by and for Indigenous people within Indigenous cosmologies" (p. 27). As a collective that includes settler people, we do not claim to be engaging in Indigenous research (although some Indigenous members do engage in Indigenous research). We also appreciate Liboiron's articulations of anticolonial research, characterized by how it does not "reproduce settler and colonial entitlement to Land and Indigenous cultures, concepts, knowledges, and lifeworlds…and does not foreground settler and colonial goals" (p. 27).

As we move through this process, we seek to connect anticolonial research approaches to the practice of kinship building (Whyte, 2020). Thus, we understand that relationship building is a central focus of research or research *as relationship* (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As we reflect upon what it means to practice anticolonial relations in academia, we begin from the presumption that although the academy is deeply entrenched in white supremacy and colonialism, there is potential to use academic research in ways that challenge broader structures of oppression. Although making this work legible within and to academic institutions can risk co-optation and potentially damage relationships, we seek to navigate this tricky terrain. We continue to ask ourselves: how can we use institutional funding—which is built to reproduce colonial relations, practices, and processes—to do anti-colonial work? How can we practice appropriate forms of care with one another while doing this work?

While academic structures can hinder the work of relational accountability, we are also aware of the spaces we can create to put relational accountability into practice. For example, making space for the personal, whether through intentional conversations, sharing vulnerabilities, silliness, and food (Reo, 2019). In our scholarly work, we aim to respectfully centre, cite, and credit the work of Indigenous scholars, feminists, and community activists. In practice, we aim to carry out research that transfers financial resources to people who are doing the work of land rematriation and use research funds and resources to support relationship-building rooted in solidarity. We also participate in ongoing learning and reflexivity to show up in a good way and better understand our place in the world. Our aim as a collective is to live and work in good relation with one another and share some of what we are learning with others. This means coming together as we began: eating nachos, enjoying one another's company, learning from one another, and developing a collective vision and strategy for radically different futures.

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Danielle Boissoneau is Anishnaabekwe from the shorelines of the Great Lakes. Born and raised in Garden River, Ontario, Danielle has developed a keen relationship with the land and the water through immersive experiences, like pulling and carrying well water and berry picking on hot, sunny days. Since then, she has transformed into a mother, seedkeeper, writer and responsibility keeper. Danielle

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Commentary

Deconstructing "Canadian cuisine": Towards decolonial food futurities on Turtle Island

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Abstract

As scholars and community activists, to secure a just food system, we must first acknowledge our complicity in hierarchal power structures that shape structural inequities by questioning the underlying socio-political currents and interrogating the dominant relationships within our food system. In this commentary, the authors reflect upon their intersectional lived experiences interacting with food systems in the settler nation of Canada. They explore the complex interplay of systemic racism, settler colonialism and neoliberalism within the Canadian food system by deconstructing the indefinable essence of "Canadian cuisine" and mapping these situated insights onto the process of gastronomic multiculturalism. The authors provide their perspective that an entry point along the ongoing process of securing decolonial food futurities on Turtle Island requires a conscious commitment to building interrelational solidarity across differences, reckoning with colonial land politics and supporting food sovereignty for both racialized communities and Indigenous Peoples.

Keywords: settler colonialism; neoliberalism; food sovereignty; decolonization

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Résumé

Comme personnes intellectuelles et militantes communautaires, pour assurer un système alimentaire juste, nous devons d'abord reconnaître notre complicité dans les structures de pouvoir hiérarchique qui forment des iniquités structurelles. Il s'agit pour cela de questionner les courants sociopolitiques et les relations dominantes dans notre système alimentaire. Dans cette analyse, les auteures réfléchissent à leurs expériences multidimensionnelles impliquant une interaction avec les systèmes alimentaires de la nation colonisatrice au Canada. Elles explorent le jeu complexe entre racisme systémique, colonialisme et néolibéralisme au sein du système alimentaire canadien en déconstruisant l'essence indéfinissable de la « cuisine canadienne » et en situant les perceptions qui y sont liées dans le processus de multiculturalisme gastronomique. Selon les auteures, un point d'entrée sur la décolonisation de l'avenir alimentaire sur Turtle Island requiert un engagement conscient à construire une solidarité interrelationnelle au-delà des différences, faisant les comptes par rapport aux politiques foncières coloniales et appuyant la souveraineté alimentaire à la fois pour les communautés racialisées et les peuples autochtones.

[SM] With kinship ties from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom, I will describe myself as a guest (Koleszar-Green, 2019) on the territory of Turtle Island that I now call "home". When I ask myself what "Canadian cuisine" is—the images conjured are those of the international fast-food chains or pseudo foods I see everywhere in my neighbourhood. This is purposeful, and the intended imagery, a deliberate construction and manifestation of spatial colonization, a feature of capital's control of the food environment (Koç et al., 2012). The question persists—does Canada have specific culturally embedded food traditions that I can pinpoint as specific to "Canadians?" Now, this query begs the question of identity and nationhood affiliation—who wields the power to bequeath such an identity? And who then is considered under the dominion of "Canada" and can be nourished on these lands?

[HM] As a Trinbagonian transplant with roots in the Caribbean, to an uninvited settler on dispossessed lands of Turtle Island navigating a double diaspora, I'm often struck with a haunting cultural absence of how to articulate "Canadian cuisine" to peers and family members within the Caribbean "homeland." I've realized that this tension is illuminating, helping us to unpack and problematize settler place-making fantasies on Turtle Island (K. Rizarri, personal communication, July 2021). This elusive absence forces one to confront how settler colonial societies are constructed around erasure and assimilation, resulting in systems that reflect these values and at its core the imaginary ethos of land belonging to no one, "terra nullius" (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Rotz, 2017). Strengthening and defending the legitimacy of the settler nation functions on the ongoing disruption of Indigenous food systems, dismantling and erasing non-Eurocentric relational food practices and the marginalization of communities of colour along with their associated culinary traditions. This colonization of food is just as much spiritual as it is physical, ensuring the all-encompassing dominion of the settler nation and by extension the global corporate food regime.

Since first contact with Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, settler nation-building myths have sought to maintain white supremacy and its colonizing efforts, resulting in today's manifestations of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism in food systems in "Canada." From the politics of environmental dispossession to the exploitation of Black and Asian seasonal migrant bodies, "Canada's" food system is perpetually entangled with settler colonial logics of dominion and in its current form, bolstered by the neoliberal market economy (Koç et al., 2021).

The presence of foodscapes in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), hubs of cultural food expressions for an ethnically diverse multiplicity (e.g., Little India, Chinatown, Little Italy, Little Jamaica, Little Ethiopia, etc.) exemplify the precarious position of navigating these tensions (Ferrero, 2002).

Through the interplay of market forces, these cultural foodscapes highlight the exploitative relationship associated with the profitability of ethnicity (Grey & Newman, 2018). These communities are celebrated by the settler nation, seemingly embodying a "privileged" status on a landscape that has been stripped of any Indigenous identity. Their privilege extends as they simultaneously do not threaten the settler nation's legitimacy and engage with its neoliberal market economy.

Cultural foodscapes in the GTA are thus intertwined with different configurations of power, demonstrating the fragility of settler place-making on occupied territory (Koç et al., 2021). It is an intentional erasure that one can traverse the culinary diversity of the world within the bounds of the GTA, but the diversity of culturally rooted Indigenous cuisine like bannock, three sisters stew, and traditional Indigenous wild foods are either absent or gentrified and reoriented toward the palate that originally sought their eradication (Grey & Newman, 2018).

Now, we are not arguing that cultural foodscapes are problematic, but the notion of land access and use is. Unlike ethnicity, Indigeneity has an inextricable territorial dimension which asserts an inherent right to specific lands and self-determination on those lands. Yet the settler nation purposely constructs powerful narrative erasures and operates on the false equivalence of Indigenous and minority groups to maintain its policies of dominion (Grey & Newman, 2018). We must recognize that land access is entangled with the politics of environmental dispossession reinforced by settler control, which in the GTA began with a difference in worldviews involving inequitable and coerced treaties between the British Crown and various Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (Freeman, 2010; Mintz, 2019).

The settler nation has thus deliberately spatially configured the lands of "Canada" by enacting colonial boundaries, conferring access to those who fit its white settler narrative, and designating Indigenous Peoples as another minority group vying for equal incorporation (Fortier, 2022). These structural assimilatory practices align with market control mechanisms limiting how one can procure food off the land and make a living by it. This contrasts with honouring the land as sacred and establishing ongoing obligations to share the land through responsibility and reciprocity for the mutual benefit of all (Mohawk, 2008; Kimmerer, 2013). Even today, ongoing settler occupation of the landscape continues with the encroachment on Indigenous Peoples' traditional territories, restrictions on sovereign land-based food practices, and efforts to extinguish Indigenous title to the land (Freeman, 2010; Fortier, 2022; Rotz, 2017; Bégin & Sharma, 2017).

In an attempt to conceal this controversial dispossession of traditional Indigenous lands, the GTA proudly identifies itself in terms of its contemporary ethnic diversity through cultural foodscapes rather than its history of displacement (Freeman, 2010). Grey and

Neman (2018) describe this process as *gastronomic multiculturalism,* whereby the settler nation systemically produces a national multiethnic culinary identity which recognizes the value of ethnic ingredients and techniques. Yet, SM highlighted that the multicultural narrative painted by the settler nation as a haven for transplanted diverse communities is a façade on occupied territory (Freeman, 2010). "Canada" with its multicultural ideology cannot recognize food sovereign practices of the different immigrant communities who come to these lands as settlers/guests because it will undermine its structural denial of Indigenous land dispossession and Indigenous food sovereignty to their traditional territories and cultural food practices. Thus, the settler nation uses this guise of gastronomic multiculturalism to cement its dominion and justify its "culinary colonialism" which Grey and Newman (2018) articulate as "a historical transit from destruction and denigration of ingredients and cuisines, to forced assimilation to a Settler gastronomic norm, to cultural appropriation of Indigenous foods and dishes" (p. 726).

It's unsettling that with few exceptions, wild game (which is a livelihood food source for non-urban Indigenous and Northern communities) cannot be sold in restaurants, butcher shops, or grocery stores in Canada. Yet there are restaurants in the GTA that have prospered by co-opting traditional Indigenous cuisine under the guise of "wild culinary delights of Canada" utilizing the colonial government's licensed farm sources, as this aligns with settler control of resources and livelihoods (Mintz, 2019; Koç et al., 2021).

As a result, the politics of colonial land dispossession cements "Canada's" food system to the global corporate food regime as neoliberal capitalist and agro-industrial practices disarticulate traditional land-based practices and non-capitalist ways of food consumption. This reality is further complicated by modes of neoliberal capitalist individualism and competition which have permeated all levels of existence, rupturing the symbiotic relationships with the land, living beings, and sources of sustenance (Kimmerer, 2013).

Thus, when the question is asked what "Canadian cuisine" is, the response corresponds to a fast-food landscape dominated by market forces. This nutrition transition characterized by the replacement of traditional foods from the land and sea with foods that can be purchased through the market economy structurally reinforces nationalistic ideals of the "Canadian" settler identity disrupting traditional ways of food procurement and processing (Raschke & Cheema, 2006; Koç et al., 2012). The ongoing industrialization, colonization, and racialization within food systems in "Canada", forces communities to accept these mechanized and unnatural constructions of food access. HM noted the frenzied anticipation accompanying the opening of global food chain outposts, where people would wait for hours to purchase these pseudo-foods like Jollibee or Chick-fil-A.

Food is an edible dynamic, not just for nourishment or sustenance of self but of community, culture, and kinship to the land and one another. Repairing disconnected relationships as a result of the industrialization and colonization of all aspects of life will determine our collective futures on this landscape. Thus, navigating systems which seek dominion over what we eat, how we eat and our relationships to our sources of nourishment is an act of radical political resistance (Fortier, 2022). To ensure a just food system, we must problematize the dominant meanings and question the legitimacy of power within our food system. As scholars/activists we need to interrogate: Who was the system constructed for? Who does it exclude? We must endeavor to repair the disconnected relationships as a result of the industrialization of all aspects of human lives. By reclaiming sovereignty over our bodies, the land, and our cultural food practices we engage in a process of

decolonization situating food futurities away from the dominance of the global corporate food regime.

As an entry point along the journey to decolonize sovereign food futurities on Turtle Island we must first reconcile with colonial land politics and return dispossessed lands and territories to Indigenous Peoples (Nelson, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The first step is to acknowledge our complicity in hierarchal power structures that shape food injustices and create a deliberate rupture in settler place-making by upholding treaty obligations and centering the worldviews and food sovereign practices of Indigenous Peoples. Only then can we begin establishing interrelational solidarity founded on nation-to-nation relationships towards an incommensurable future of co-existence for both settler and Indigenous Peoples securing the protection of our shared food systems (Fortier, 2022; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

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Commentary

'Paki go home': The story of racism in the Gerrard India Bazaar

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Abstract

For South Asian Canadians who migrated to Toronto in the 1970s, the only place for them to purchase and consume South Asian foodstuffs would have been in the area referred to as 'Little India', which later developed into what is referred to today as the Gerrard India Bazaar (GIB). Little India is located on Gerrard Street, encompassing the nine blocks from Greenwood Avenue to Coxwell Avenue. The very first South Asian entrepreneur in Gerrard Street was Gian Naaz, who rented the defunct Eastwood Theatre in 1972 and began showing films in Hindi and other South Asian languages. Naaz's success inspired and attracted other South Asian entrepreneurs, some of whom opened restaurants and grocery stores. These early South Asian businesses on Gerrard Street combatted racism and racial stereotyping and the GIB was a microcosm of the violences South Asians experienced all across Toronto in the 1970s and 80s. As such, this paper tells the story of how South Asians, both them and their businesses, persevered and helped develop the GIB as an ethnic enclave because it allowed South Asians to affirm notions of home and belonging in Canada, all without ever having a distinct residential identity.

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Résumé

Pour les Canadiens d'origine sud-asiatique qui se sont installés à Toronto dans les années 1970, l'unique endroit où acheter et consommer des produits alimentaires sud-asiatiques se trouvait dans la zone surnommée « Little India », qui s'est développée depuis, et est devenue le Gerrard India Bazaar (GIB). *Little India* est située sur la rue Gerrard et comprend les neuf pâtés de maisons entre l'avenue Greenwood et l'avenue Coxwell. Gian Naaz, le tout premier entrepreneur sud-asiatique sur la rue Gerrard, y a loué le défunt Eastwood Theatre en 1972 afin de présenter des films en hindi et en d'autres langues sud-asiatiques. Le succès de Naaz a inspiré et attiré d'autres entrepreneurs sud-asiatiques, dont certains ont ouvert des restaurants et des épiceries. Ces premiers commerces sud-asiatiques sur la rue Gerrard luttaient contre le racisme et les stéréotypes raciaux; le GIB formait alors un microcosme où ressortaient les violences subies par les personnes d'origine sud-asiatique dans tout le Toronto des années 1970 et 1980. Cet article raconte l'histoire de la manière dont les Sud-Asiatiques et leurs entreprises ont persévéré et ont contribué à faire du GIB une enclave ethnique parce qu'il leur permettait d'affirmer les notions de foyer et d'appartenance au Canada, sans pour autant partager une identité résidentielle distincte.

Keywords: Gerrard; bazaar; racism; South Asian; food; Toronto

For many South Asian immigrants, a visit to the Gerrard India Bazaar (GIB) "reminded [them] of the hustle and bustle of a market back home. As soon as [one] stepped out of the 506 streetcar, you'd smell the barbecued corn, you'd hear the *ghazals* and Bollywood pop songs blaring from the shops, and your mouth would start watering for *mithai* and *pani puri*" (Yelaja, 2007, para. 3). These sights and smells that attracted South Asians to the GIB were in many ways a sensory assault on white Canadians who carried negative connotations of South Asians and their cuisine. One white woman remarked that South Asians are "dirty, physically dirty—you can see it on them. And [their food] smells..." (Jones, 1975, A1). These stereotypes and negative perceptions were widely held and affected South Asians in their everyday lives. More specifically, white Canadians did not want 'unassimilable' settlers with their "smelly cuisines" to settle in Canada (Mehta, 2012, p.156). 'Smelly cuisines' were a major cause of concern for white Canadians, so much so that newspaper reports perceived them as being a hindrance to the ability of South Asians to acculturate and assimilate into Canada. Due to these stereotypes, racism plagued the GIB and it saw South Asians tackling concerns from white Canadians that they would pollute the "clean Canadian cultural landscape" (Mehta, 2012, p.156). Racism consisted of verbal abuse, property damage, and even physical abuse. As such, this paper will discuss how the entrepreneurs on Gerrard Street persevered through racial discrimination to allow the GIB to emerge as one of the most prominent sites where South Asian immigrants could purchase and consume South Asian foodstuffs, and how food, as a conduit for multisensory immersion, was weaponized against the South Asian community.

The rise of the GIB was not without hostility. Racism was rife during the 1970s and 80s. According to Ubale, in Toronto in 1977, half of the complaints received by

the Ontario Human Rights Communion concerned racial problems (Ubale, 1977, p.26). In 1977, 40% of the 200,000 South Asians in Canada lived in and around Toronto, and they were especially targeted during this time. Ubale looked at reports of hate crime where South Asian men were brutally assaulted, threatened, many had their homes vandalized, and others experienced name calling with phrases like "dirty Paki" or "Paki go home". The derogatory term "Paki" was a particularly potent one and is recorded as having been first used in London in mid-1966 (Ubale, 1978, p.18). The term was so offensive because it reduced the term South Asian, which itself is an umbrella term that refers to people from the Indian subcontinent, and typically includes the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, to a singular identity. Immigrants from these countries are diverse in terms of their origin, ethnicity, religion, language, food and their experiences in Canada are just as diverse, and to reduce them to simply "Paki" was an erasure of their unique identities. Emerging in London, the term entered the Canadian lexicon in 1975 when it appeared in a *Toronto Star* newspaper article (Ubale, 1978, p.18). This article was met with immediate backlash from the South Asian community who held several protests to highlight the issue of how news media in their reports on racism in Canada has used the term "Paki" as accepted terminology to describe Asian immigrants (Owaisi, 1975, p.2).

Many of these crimes went unpunished, and South Asians in Toronto felt that despite paying taxes, they did not enjoy the same protections from the state as white Canadians and also criticized the inaction from the police. One business owner recalled that, "Every second day our front glass was broken...Every weekend there were fights with young white thugs beating up people with hockey sticks, saying, 'Paki go home'" (Plummer, 2012, para. 20). Owners, as well as the customers waiting in line at the Naaz Theatre, the first South Asian business on Gerrard Street, or various other establishments would hear these taunts. Gian Naaz also reported racist slogans being painted outside of his theatre and was even the victim of a racial assault himself. On May 10, 1975, Naaz and his friend Ghulam Rabbeni were taunted and called "dirty Pakis", and told "they're making the country dirty", and eventually assaulted by Thomas Givens, a twenty-year old Toronto man, and two of his friends (Keating, 1977, p.4). Rabbeni was even struck in the head with a pipe, knocking him unconscious. Despite being confronted violently, Naaz continued to persist with keeping his theatre open because he believed, "For people from India, there was nothing else at the time" (Plummer, 2012, para. 4). Another racial attack took place on February 25, 1978 when the windows of Darbar-e-Akbari, a Pakistani restaurant on Gerrard Street, were smashed and the main entrance had a swastika painted outside. Mr. Haider Khan, the owner, decided not to remove the swastikas as a symbolic reminder of the hatred South Asians experienced and were experiencing during the time. Again, the police took no action and Mr. Khan was told by the police that "[they] can't guard [his] store 24 hours a day" (Crescent Correspondent, 1978, p.2).

Due to the inaction of the Toronto Police, the restaurant owner of Moti Mahal, Gurjit Chadha, was discouraged from stepping outside of his store unnecessarily. He said, "I don't go outside much because I want to stay out of trouble. Once you get into trouble, there's just more trouble" (Johnson, 1980, p.1). This trouble he refers to included having his glass window smashed, being taunted by gangs of white youths on the way home or on the streets. "They call us Pakis. You don't do anything, but inside you get mad" (Johnson, 1980, p.1). Another restaurant owner named Vig Hashim also stated that his business had suffered due to intrusion by white youths who would abuse patrons

dining inside of his restaurant, and sometimes, even throw cigarette butts and dirt in their food. Hashim also said that his attempts at trying to resolve tensions would be futile, and the intruders would just say "Shut up, Paki" (Johnson, 1980, p.2), and this was because they knew there would be no real consequences. Despite the indifference shown by the police to the patrons of the GIB and the often-violent acts of racism experienced by the South Asian community, people still came to Gerrard Street on the weekends. They still brought their families to connect their past to their present, and to show their children how they used to experience life 'back home'.

Not only did businesses persevere, but so too did the South Asians for whom the bazaar would have fulfilled a nostalgic longing for home. For many, "coming to see a movie in Naaz Theatre was like going back home" (Beveridge, 2017, 1:57). Aside from watching movies, one could also hear different South Asians languages being spoken, visually see traditional South Asian clothes being worn, and smell roast corn, and burning incense (Acharya, 1997, A7). As such, the GIB offered a sensory experience to an Indian which was described by Jandoo as being similar to "making a journey to India, with all the same sights, smells and atmosphere" (Yelaja, 2005, A01). The GIB sold not just movie tickets or ethnic foodstuffs, but served a greater purpose by providing a tangible connection to the 'homeland' for the South Asian community.

When Gian Naaz first opened Naaz Theatre, he did so with the goal of having a "place where Indians could meet socially and where women would have a reason to wear saris" (Bauder, 2010, p.19). The GIB was and continues to be a unique area because it has a well-established South Asian commercial identity, despite very few South Asians actually living in the vicinity. People continue to visit the area en masse despite there being a boom in the '905 Area' malls in Brampton and Mississauga that also cater to a South Asian clientele. As such, the GIB as a space was of fundamental importance to immigrants in retaining their culture, and through the lens of food history, one can get unique insight into the violent and traumatic experiences that the South Asian community experienced during their settlement, establishing of businesses, and identity formation. Despite the various challenges to the South Asian community, the perseverance shown by the early South Asian entrepreneurs, some of whom still operate their stores on Gerrard Street in 2022, and their patrons allowed the GIB to thrive as a space where South Asians could freely express themselves through their clothes, language, and the food they consumed. Furthermore, the GIB served a dual function in not only catering to South Asians, but also serving as a learning space for white-Canadians who could come in and purchase what would otherwise be viewed as exotic products. This learning experience acculturated Canadians to South Asian cultures and created pathways that allowed them, and their "smelly cuisines" to become more accepted in Canadian society, and in turn, lessen the racial discrimination that South Asians historically experienced.

Aqeel Ihsan is a PhD History Candidate at York University, specializing in migration and food history. His research interests focus on the South Asian diaspora currently residing in Canada. His doctoral research seeks to conduct a food history of Toronto by placing 'smelly cuisines' at the centre and chronologically tracing the history of the most prominent site where South Asian immigrants could purchase and consume South Asian foodstuffs, the Gerrard India Bazaar. He hopes his research can extend beyond food history and add to Canada's overall history of immigration.

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Commentary

Ethnic food practices, health, and cultural racism: Diabetes risk discourse among racialized immigrants in Canada

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Abstract

Type 2 diabetes is more prevalent among racialized immigrant groups in Canada compared to the general population. Hence, "ethnicity" is identified as a risk factor for diabetes, focusing on ethnic differences in health behaviours. By linking ethnic differences and diabetes risk, ethnic food cultures are problematized. Using the concept of cultural racism, this paper explores the ways in which ethnic food cultures are used to explain racial inequities in health. This paper will conclude by supporting the naming of racism, rather than ethnicity, as one of the root causes of diabetes among racialized immigrant populations and health inequities in Canada.

Keywords: Ethnic food; diabetes; racism; immigrant; traditional foods; social determinants; health inequities

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Résumé

Le diabète de type 2 a une prévalence plus élevée chez les groupes immigrants racisés du Canada par rapport au reste de la population. Par conséquent, l'« ethnicité » est considérée comme un facteur de risque du diabète, ce qui pointe du doigt les différences ethniques en matière d'habitudes de vie. Relier les différences ethniques aux risques de diabète implique de problématiser les cultures alimentaires ethniques. S'appuyant sur le concept de racisme culturel, cet article explore les manières dont les cultures alimentaires ethniques sont utilisées pour expliquer des inégalités raciales en santé. La conclusion à laquelle nous arrivons ici est plutôt que le racisme lui-même, et non l'ethnicité, constitue une des principales causes du diabète chez les populations immigrantes racisées et des inégalités en matière de santé au Canada.

Introduction

Diabetes is more prevalent among racialized populations in Canada and is inequitably distributed by social factors such as education and income (Gagne & Veenstra, 2017; Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2018). Diabetes is a chronic health condition that can lead to complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, and depression (PHAC, 2017). Over 3.4 million people in Canada were living with diabetes in 2017 to 2018 (PHAC, 2021); 90 percent of cases are Type 2, which is considered to be preventable or delayable by behavioural interventions (Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines Expert Committee, 2018). The literature recognizes social factors as contributors to Type 2 Diabetes (T2DM; Hill-Briggs et al., 2020). Yet the dominant discourse about diabetes risk centres on biological, cultural, and behavioural factors rather than the distal social determinants of health such as the racialization of poverty, exclusion of racialized immigrants in the labour market, and systemic racism (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada (2012) identifies ethnicity as a risk factor for T2DM, "the influence of ethnicity reflects both biological and behavioural differences that influence diabetes risk" (p. 69). Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines Expert Committee (2018) identifies these "higher risk" ethnic groups as peoples of "African, Arab, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, or South Asian descent" (p.S24). These "ethnic behavioural differences" imply that the healthy eating and physical activity behaviours of "non-white" "ethnic" cultures are the explanation for the racial inequities in health. The linking of behavioural differences and ethnicity to diabetes risk reinforces white healthism[1] ideals and blames racialized groups for their own ill-health.

In this paper, I argue that invoking "ethnicity" as a risk factor for Type 2 Diabetes functions as a form of cultural racism by essentializing ethnic food practices among racialized groups and attributing ethnic food practices to higher diabetes rates. I will first briefly review the literature on cultural racism and then apply the

[1] Healthism refers to the idea that individuals have the moral responsibility to maintain good health where the "problems and solutions of health are situated at the individual level" (Crawford, 1980, p. 369).

concept to ethnic food practices in the diabetes risk discourse. I will conclude by highlighting the calls to address systemic racism as a root cause of health inequities. While diabetes rates among Indigenous peoples in Canada are particularly alarming due to the negative impacts of colonial policies and anti-Indigenous racism, I will focus on racialized immigrants in this paper because of the development of the cultural racism literature studying post-war immigration to Europe.

What is cultural racism?

According to Mukhopadhyay and Chua (2017), cultural racism is a "form of racism that relies on cultural differences rather than on biological markers of racial superiority or inferiority. These cultural differences can be real, imagined, or constructed" (p. 377). This concept emerged after World War II from the nationalist reactions to the influx of immigrants to Europe (Barker, 1981; Balibar, 1991). Scholars conceptualized "cultural racism" to understand this "new" form of racism that is rooted in the perceived *cultural* superiority of Europeans, compared to the earlier form of racism which is rooted in biological and genetic arguments (Wren, 2001).

There are two overlapping features of cultural racism in the literature: cultural essentialism and colour-blindness. Both are still prominent ideologies embedded in mainstream understandings of racial differences in health through white neoliberal healthism. Cultural essentialism bounds the essence of groups and individuals to static homogenous cultural communities (Siebers & Dennissen, 2015). Culture is essentialized as overly simplistic, ahistorical, stereotypical, and bounded to the past (Mukhopadhyay & Chua, 2017). Racism is "disguised" as cultural difference, pointing to immigrants' lack of agency to reflect on their own culture and to "adapt" to Western culture (Wikan, 1999) and their "supposed cultural deficiencies" (Li, 1999, p. 5). In complement, colour-blindness denies racism as the explanation for racial inequality (Wikan, 1999), often represented by phrases such as "we don't see colour" or "we treat everyone equally." Based on the neoliberal ideology of meritocracy, racialized immigrants are judged by their effort to adapt their culture (Balibar, 1991; Mukhopadhyay & Chua, 2017) and to overcome hardships from marginalization (Li, 1999).

Social scientists have been interested in the relationship between diabetes and culture due to its complex "biological, demographic, social and behavioral factors" (Ferzacca, 2012, p. 412). Cultural knowledge about racialized immigrants can contribute to the stereotyping of the "other" (Said, 2018). Tuchman (2011) argued that "science, medicine, and culture all worked together to produce believable narratives" (p. 29). She showed that research on ethnic associations of diabetes shifted from the Jewish population to African Americans along with the implementation of racist policies such as the GI Bill and Jim Crow Laws (Tuchman, 2011).

Diabetes risk, ethnic food practices, and cultural racism

Socially constructed categorization of race/ethnicity within clinical studies shapes how we understand diet and diabetes; such Eurocentric knowledge is then reinforced in nutrition policies and professional practices. We can use the concept of cultural racism to critique the linking of ethnic food practices with the risk of T2DM among racialized immigrant populations. First, the identified ethnic groups are targeted for nutrition interventions to reduce their risks (Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines Expert Committee, 2010). These nutrition interventions focus on modifying ethnic food practices and diets. Often "non-compliance" to these interventions is again explained through cultural differences rather than structural barriers to healthy eating (Keval, 2015), such as the lack of access to fruits and vegetables among racialized neighbourhoods, Eurocentric dietary advice provided by health practitioners, and the racialization of poverty.

Second, the categorization of the at-risk ethnic groups is socially constructed through colour-blindness, which muddles ethnicity, culture, and race (Wikan, 1999). "Ethnicity" and "culture" are poorly conceptualized in diabetes research (Keval, 2015) and racial bias is often reinforced through ethnic categorization (Ahmad & Bradby, 2007) via the white medical gaze. "African, Arab, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, or South Asian" are racial and political categories. These identities emerged within political, historical, and social contexts and often in response to racism, white supremacy, and colonization. In research, the genetic-biological basis for diabetes risk combines with cultural risks to fuel cultural racism discourse and shape interventions. Differences in ethnic food practices are used as rationale for interventions to address the intake of fat, carbohydrates, and salt among racialized populations in a reductionist manner. For example, the website for the Asian Diabetes Prevention Initiative (n.d.) states that "Unfortunately, current Asian diets have white rice as a main staple. Salt is another major part of Asian diets that is consumed in excess." This form of reductionist and medical understanding of dietary practices overlooks the historical, economic, and cultural contexts behind the use of salt and the intake of grains in immigrant populations. In addition, "at-risk" ethnicities are grouped together and assigned the same "risk." There is much diversity in the food practices among peoples of "African, Arab, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, or South Asian descent."

Third, ethnic food practices are subjected to essentialization, which risks stereotyping and victim blaming. Cultural practices are reduced as homogenous, static, and resistant to change (Bradby, 2012). For example, one study stated that "South Asians cultural values place a high premium on the enjoyment of good, tasty food, which is at the heart of family life, and hospitality towards family and friends" (Bhopal, 2013, p. 37). This view labels South Asian food practices as "risky" in contributing to the development of diabetes (Keval, 2015). A scoping review by Sanou et al. (2013) found forty-nine Canadian studies examining the changes in dietary habits among immigrants by comparing their maintenance of "traditional diets" with the adoption of "host country lifestyle." They noted the "risks and benefits" associated with maintaining traditional ethnic diets (Sanou et al., 2013). Such studies reinforce the reductionist notion of ethnic food practices and construct a false dichotomy of traditional-host food cultures. We can also point to the racial bias in the literature by contrasting the ways studies discuss the

health benefits of the "Mediterranean Diet" (Burt, 2021) against the risks of "South Asian" diets.

There are limitations in applying cultural racism to food and nutrition. Cultural racism as a concept draws from anti-immigrant policy analysis (Wren, 2001). Also, analysis requires deeper explorations of the complexity of the cultural meaning of food, eating, and health among racialized and diaspora communities (Keval, 2015). Lastly, Leach (2005) argued that cultural racism is not "new" but part of the same phenomenon of systemic racism and white supremacy; racism is often normalized, subtle, and rooted in historical and geopolitical contexts.

Racism and the social determinants of health

Practitioners and scholars have started to shift the focus away from cultural explanations of health disparities to social-structural ones (Ferzacca, 2012; Ahmad & Bradby, 2007). Socioeconomic factors and racism align with the Social Determinants of Health framework (Commission on Social Determinants of Health [CSDH], 2008) in explaining racial inequities in health. This framework attributes health inequities as "avoidable and unjust" distribution of power and material resources (CSDH, 2008). Factors such as food insecurity, race, housing, and income distribution (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010) intersect with each other to create racial inequalities in health. Examples of these factors include the lack of access to healthy foods in lower-income neighbourhoods (Jack et al., 2012) and the racialization of lower-paying jobs (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Ogunwole and Golden (2021) reframed racism as a "fundamental root cause of diabetes disparities that lead to maladaptive health behaviours" (p. 12). A systematic review of 293 studies by Paradies et al. (2015) found that racism was associated with poorer mental health and physical health, including diabetes.

Conclusion

I call on health practitioners to reflect on our racial bias and participate in advocacy to address systemic racism while working with racialized communities to improve their nutritional health (Ng & Wai, 2021). The labeling of racialized populations as "at-risk" often masks the root causes of social inequities (Parker, 2020). Therefore, ethnicity should be removed as a risk factor in education materials targeted at individuals and communities; instead, evidence of racial inequities should inform policy to address systemic racism in our food environments and inequitable access to healthy foods. The purpose of this paper is not to discount the

role of culture and traditional foods in shaping healthy eating and wellbeing. Ethnic food practices must be considered when planning nutrition interventions that are community-based and culturally safe. We can recognize the meanings of ethnic diets of diverse racialized immigrants by sharing their lived experiences in the context of the social determinants of health (Ristovski-Slijepcevic et al., 2008; Lawton et al., 2007; Lucas & Li, 2020).

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Interview

"Dismantling the structures and sites that create unequal access to food": Paul Taylor and Elaine Power in conversation about food justice

Paul Taylor[a*] and Elaine Power[b*]

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Abstract

Paul Taylor, Executive Director of FoodShare Toronto from 2017 until early 2023, has become a key voice for food justice in Canada. As a Black man who grew up in material poverty in Toronto, Paul brought his experience, knowledge, and skills to Canada's largest and most influential community food organization, FoodShare Toronto. Under his guidance, FoodShare focussed on collaborating with and taking its cues from those who were historically excluded as leaders in the food movement, including Black and Brown people, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, queer people, and poor people. FoodShare also turned a critical eye toward its own practices, seeking to model food justice within the organization.

In the summer of 2019, Elaine Power, a Professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Studies at Queen's University, interviewed Paul for a research project on community food programs. In the interview, Paul explains that growing up poor, Black, and hungry in Toronto was the best education for his position at FoodShare. He shares his philosophy of leadership, his understanding of food justice, and the ways that non-profit organizations can contribute more meaningfully to food justice. Paul understands food insecurity as a lack of income, which disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and people of colour. Therefore, non-profits concerned about food justice must pay living wages and close the gap between the highest and lowest paid

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employees. To be more effective in the pursuit of justice, Paul advises non-profit organizations to listen to their clients—and take their advice.

Keywords: Food justice; food insecurity; BIPOC; community food programs; food movement; Canada

Résumé

Paul Taylor, directeur exécutif de FoodShare Toronto de 2017 jusqu'au tout début 2023, est devenu une voix majeure de la justice alimentaire au Canada. En tant qu'homme noir ayant grandi dans la pauvreté matérielle à Toronto, Paul a apporté son expérience, son savoir et ses compétences à l'organisme communautaire alimentaire le plus grand et le plus influent du Canada, FoodShare Toronto. Sous sa direction, FoodShare a misé sur la collaboration avec celles et ceux qui ont été historiquement exclus du leadership des mouvements alimentaires et sur l'écoute de ces personnes. Cela inclut les personnes noires et brunes, autochtones, ayant des handicaps, queer et pauvres. FoodShare a aussi adopté un regard critique sur ses propres pratiques, visant à être un modèle de justice alimentaire à l'intérieur même de l'organisme.

À l'été 2019, Elaine Power, professeure à l'École de kinésiologie et d'études sur la santé de Queen's University, a interviewé Paul dans le cadre d'une recherche sur les programmes d'alimentation communautaires. Dans cet entretien, Paul explique que son expérience comme jeune pauvre noir et affamé à Toronto fut la meilleure éducation qu'il pouvait recevoir pour jouer son rôle chez FoodShare. Il partage sa philosophie du leadership et sa compréhension de la justice alimentaire, et aborde les manières dont les organismes sans but lucratif peuvent contribuer davantage à la justice alimentaire. Derrière l'insécurité alimentaire, Paul reconnaît un manque de revenu, qui affecte de manière disproportionnelle les personnes noires, autochtones et de couleur. C'est pourquoi les organismes sans but lucratif concernés par la justice alimentaire doivent offrir une rémunération décente et combler l'écart entre les salaires les plus élevés et les plus faibles chez leur personnel. Pour augmenter l'efficacité de la progression vers la justice, Paul suggère aux organismes sans but lucratif d'écouter leur clientèle – et d'accueillir leurs conseils.

Introduction

Paul Taylor is a dynamic, relentless, life-long activist for social justice and equity who has become a key voice in the conversation about food justice in Canada. First at the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House and then at the Gordon Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, Paul established himself as an outspoken advocate for the right to food. Under his leadership, Gordon Neighbourhood House was identified as one of the first Good Food Organizations in Canada by Community Food Centres of Canada.

As the Executive Director of FoodShare Toronto from 2017 to early 2023, Paul re-oriented the organization's operations toward food justice (FoodShare, n.d.a), using an equity lens to center those most affected by food insecurity who have been historically excluded from leadership in the food movement. Knowing that FoodShare must model the transformations it wants to see in the wider world (Taylor, 2022a), Paul spearheaded significant changes to FoodShare's hiring and employment practices, including becoming a living wage employer, implementing a three to one salary ratio between the highest and lowest paid workers, and publicly releasing its pay grid (FoodShare, 2022a). In 2022, FoodShare's new policy to pay job applicants seventy-five dollars for each interview, in recognition of associated costs for interviewees (Taylor, 2022b), received national news attention (Davidson, 2022).

Acknowledging the Indigenous traditional territories in which FoodShare operates, the organization created an Indigenous Advisory Circle to provide guidance on its work, and it collaborates with Indigenous groups to work toward Indigenous food sovereignty. Seeking to dismantle intersecting systems of oppression, FoodShare developed an action plan to combat anti-Black racism (FoodShare, 2022b), a statement on body liberation and fat acceptance (FoodShare, n.d.b) that includes guidelines for working with partners and funders (FoodShare, 2021a), a policy for police engagement (FoodShare, n.d.c), justice-oriented fundraising guidelines (FoodShare, n.d.d), and statements on defunding the police (Taylor & Sinclair, n.d.), expressing solidarity with the Asian community (FoodShare, n.d.e), stopping the genocide of Indigenous peoples (Sinclair & Taylor, 2021), and more. At every opportunity, FoodShare has sought to support and spotlight the creative leadership of those historically excluded, for example by creating a Good Food Box with produce from local BIPOC farmers and featuring Black chefs and women chefs of colour at annual fundraising galas. In 2019, Paul worked with the University of Toronto's PROOF Centre for Research on Food Insecurity to examine racialized inequities in food insecurity. This ground-breaking research, which showed much higher rates of food insecurity among households headed by Black and Indigenous people, pointed to anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism as key drivers of food insecurity in Canada (FoodShare, 2021b).

Under Paul's leadership, FoodShare has garnered several awards, including the Toronto Foundation's Vital Ideas & Leadership Award (2018), the Aviva Community Fund prize (2017), an employee-recommended workplace award by the Globe & Mail (2017), a Maclean's Magazine award for being among the top 100 charities in Canada (2018), and more. Paul now teaches leadership and fundraising skills at Simon Fraser University's Non-profit Management Certificate and Leadership Essentials Certificate programs.

Paul is a regular media commentator and op-ed contributor who has been recognized as one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40 (2020), one of Toronto Life's 50 Most Influential People (2020) and Now Magazine's Best Activist in 2020 (and runner-up in 2021). In 2021, the Food Network Canada recognized Paul as one of ten Black Canadians making an impact in the food and beverage industry, and he received an honourable mention in the City of Toronto's Access, Equity, and Human Rights Awards. In his "activist manifesto" (Taylor, 2022c), Paul offers four principles for activism, which he elaborates in the interview below:

1) Your activist journey begins with what's important to you.

2) Stay connected and accountable to your communities.

3) Don't start with a goal. Start with curiosity.

4) Remember, nothing is fixed. Anything and everything can change for the better.

The following interview between Paul and Elaine was conducted in July 2019, as part of a SSHRC-funded research project on the ability of community food programs to contribute to advocacy for justice. The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcript has been lightly edited for clarity. The research project was approved by the Queen's University General Research Ethics Board.

Food justice: Dismantling the structures and sites that create unequal access to food

Elaine Power (EP): Can you tell me what drew you to FoodShare? What are your ideas, dreams, plans, and visions?

Paul Taylor (PT): I spent a lot of time in activist spaces in Vancouver and in the downtown east side, working with folks doing thoughtful, innovative work. Really pushing the envelope, including being critical of food banking, the food bank model, and the role food banks play in society. And for some reason, I decided to apply to be the Executive Director of the largest food security organization in the country, knowing that food security is not about food. It is about income. I think I was born desiring a real challenge *(slight laugh).* I guess from being born Black *(both laugh),* that's where it first starts. But I've always just been drawn to challenges.

So, I showed up at FoodShare asking a lot of questions. I showed up here at an organization that for decades positioned food as a response to poverty and food insecurity, in a way that is potentially not helpful. We know that, over the years, we've seen increases in the number of people accessing food banks and charitable food. We have government officials who take selfies sorting tins. It just makes me absolutely irate. I want to say, "stop sorting the tins and sort the policy. This is not the best use of your time." In a lot of ways, FoodShare and other food-based organizations have neglected meaningful policy to eradicate poverty.

My approach to leadership is one where I don't come into an organization with a vision. I come into an organization with a whole bunch of questions, and I spend a ton of time with the questions and then develop a whole bunch more. In the early days, it was really important for me to separate Paul from FoodShare. Because we were very different. And I was on a journey to see how much would be or could be reconciled through curiosity. I had worked at community-based organizations but not one focused on food-based interventions specifically. So, what I found, as I started asking more questions, was that "wait a minute, we've been doing this stuff for twenty-five years and the only things that we're celebrating are our innovations. We're not celebrating significant milestones around reductions to food insecurity or poverty, which is what we were originally tasked to do."

I spent pretty much my first year just having conversations with everyone who works here. Sitting and having a cup of tea or coffee with about 100 colleagues. And I sat and got to know everyone. It took a while. Some conversations were shorter than others. But I got to connect, ask a few questions, and introduce myself. One comment really stuck with me. Lots of them did, but one especially. It was from a woman of

colour who no longer works here; she said, "oh you know what food security is to me? Do you know what food justice is to me? It's having a good job." She talked about her work at FoodShare and how that helped her access food that she needs because of having more income. And that was the piece that was so key.

If we want to do this [food justice] work, it's not just about being seen doing this work and it's not just the sexy new program that's going to land you in the [Toronto] Star. It's about having people feel that they're respected and cared for. And also challenging ourselves to introduce the type of changes that we want to see in society. So, we said, "we're not going to advance our impact on the backs of low-wage workers." We gave the folks at the bottom of the pay scale a 25% increase and everybody else got a little bit of a pay increase, except the folks at the top who got no increase. And we're also starting to have conversations about having a ratio between the lowest-paid worker and the highest-paid worker.[1] Maybe this doesn't happen in a lot of corporations, but I think at the very least, non-profits could be having those conversations if they're really serious about income inequality.

EP: I'm delighted to hear you say "food is not the answer to poverty." I have a little theory that I'm just going to run past you. My theory is we've been Americanized, because the United States has used food as their response to poverty since the 1930s [in the form of food stamps]. And that in the 1980s, we imported food banks and we imported their model of addressing poverty, in a neoliberal political era.

PT: You're absolutely right. That point that you bring up is pretty much what inspires me to run for [political] office. That very point. We abandoned the European style of income-based interventions and wholeheartedly adopted and integrated American food-based interventions. The scariest part of that was that there was *no* political discourse, there was no opportunity for public debate, there were no media articles about that. So, this decision, that has advantaged corporate interests, was made likely in boardrooms and not in the House of Commons. That's not the way that we need to be making key decisions in this country, decisions that have significant impacts, particularly on people who are the most vulnerable. So that's one of the reasons I've said, "this is ridiculous." I've also spent a lot of time protesting outside of government buildings and offices. Sometimes it's cold and rainy, and I'm outside and they're inside. Sometimes it's very hot and they're inside in the air conditioning and ultimately not listening. Things like social assistance and ODSP, things that I've been fighting to have increased, both in BC and Ontario, are all things that are just the *basic minimum*s—I wouldn't even call them minimums. They are just something to prevent people from actually starving—or more so, I would say, to prevent a revolution. To prevent people from kicking the doors down. And I feel like it's time for us to kick the doors down. I'm tired of policy that doesn't reflect the lived experience of people across this country. Especially the four million people who are food insecure.

What we're looking for is not this incremental stuff. We need big, foundational, fundamental change to deal with the crisis before us. For FoodShare, we're really taking a bunch of steps back and saying, "first of all, who's hungry? Who is it that's poor?" When you look around at the food space, it's a lot of middle-class White folks who are university-educated running these organizations and receive funding to lead the solution-finding. So, there's a fundamental disconnect because it

[1] This was implemented in 2021, as discussed above.

means the interventions that they're designing, even in the food space—even though food isn't really the issue—the interventions are based on a middle-class bias, I think. We have an omnipresence of community gardens—there's lots of value to community gardens, but I think what we've done—there's even low-income people who are community-gardening talking about how this helps with their food security because this is the language, this is what we've taught them to say, and I think in a climate like ours, that actually doesn't help in a meaningful way. It does all sorts of other things that are wonderful.

EP: To say to grow a few carrots, and some lettuce or some eggplant or whatever, can meaningfully increase food security....

PT: It's outrageous. It's incumbent on organizations like ours to take big steps back, and we've established a few things that really guide us in our work. First, we have a nine-member Indigenous advisory circle who advise in terms of the work that we're doing, to really guide us. They're very generous in giving us space to be a little bit clumsy and ask questions. We share with them, "these are the resources available to us. This is what our work has looked like. Is there anything from this that could lend itself to supporting the issues in the Indigenous community that you're connected to and build things out of that?"

We also have an advisory committee made up now of sixty folks that we host here a couple of times a year. We pay for dinner, child-care, provide an honorarium. We have a whole range of folks but we prioritize folks of color, folks coming from communities that are most likely to experience food insecurity and poverty. When it comes to our strategic planning process, when it comes to things that we're thinking around the Good Food Box, and when it comes to looking at our food justice statement, we brought those things to those groups to *really* dive into what they thought would be the most helpful. And out of *that* has come some really awesome innovation. Like the Good Food Box: we realized, and when you looked at some of the data, the people who are accessing it were people who had higher income levels than originally was intended and was happening originally. So, we said, "ok, if this is something that we're doing and it's not doing what we're trying to do, well then we've got to make some change." So, we've turned that into a social enterprise that we hope, as we work to close the gap, is generating revenue to support the other work that we do to advance food justice. And then we've also just released a Food Justice Good Food Box. We know that farmers, particularly BIPOC farmers, urban farmers, struggle. So, we have this box where we're buying directly from Black, Indigenous, people of color, or farms that are led or run by people that are BIPOC. And it's been super exciting! It's been really excellent to see us create a market to bridge that gap between these people who are wanting to support something good and folks that would benefit from more of a platform and, importantly, some money.

EP: I loved reading on the website about your event featuring women chefs of color.

PT: It was *amazing* and it was our tenth anniversary event. It didn't come without controversy. It asked us as an organization a really tough question. And it was, "do we all understand food justice? Do we all understand equity? Do we all have an intersectional lens to how we think about these sorts of issues?" And then the immediate question after that is, "are we willing, if we don't?" When we hone in on our approach and language that we're going to use and direction for that approach, it really helps people make decisions of

whether or not they have the skill, knowledge, willingness to contribute to an organization like FoodShare, doing work in the way that we've come to do it. So, I think that was an important opportunity.

EP: Can you tell me what *you* mean when you say food justice?

PT: I think about it as dismantling the structures and sites that create unequal access to food, disproportionately folks that are Black, Indigenous, people of colour. So now, fully embracing a food justice lens, we're talking about and showing up in a bunch of places where we never showed up before. It's not just about notions of food deserts. When I was growing up, we went here because bananas were on sale, and then walked forty-five minutes to get potatoes and peppers because they were on sale there. Actually, it's more likely it was corn flakes and tuna. And peanut butter here and juice crystals there because those were the things that were on special, and we travelled a great distance. So, this notion that if you don't have access to food within a kilometer of where you live, the answer is to put food in that space—it's really about *affordability*. I've seen spaces where there's food located in communities but they're almost like mirages because people can't afford to buy the food that's there.

I think about this in the context of my mother picking me up from school. I went to school at Spadina and College, Lord Landsdowne Public School, right downtown, and would spend some time at Kensington Market. There were big mountains of fruits and vegetables, it was like art. Pretty early on, I realized that I stopped seeing them because we couldn't afford it. So, it was not something that, on the way home—despite the fact that it was there on our journey—that we could have stopped and bought a couple of those beautiful mangos.

EP: That's such an interesting way you phrased it though, it's like you didn't even see them anymore. Because it was just out of reach.

PT: Totally. And I also think that when we say food *desert*—was it Karen Washington in the US?—has been saying that they're not food deserts because that suggests that they're naturally occurring things. This is systemic racism in planning, and she started to call it food apartheid.

EP: But it's also a little different in the US. Again, I feel like we import these ideas really easily without questioning the context, the political context, the geographic context, the historical context.

PT: I agree, I agree.

EP: I was so struck by the differences between the strategic plans on the website, the latest one and the earlier one. One of the differences is that commitment to listen to people and to facilitate difficult conversations. That is so exciting.

PT: It has been so good. We're working on a food justice conference in October. We are inviting academics and corporate folks who are somewhat close to us, to push them a little bit as well. Really, it's going to be around, "how do you embed equity and ideas around food justice in your way of being?" We are excited about that.

EP: Do you have some ideas about how you do that? How you embed equity?

PT: Oh yeah! We've spent a lot of time looking at things like our hiring process and how someone goes from being out there in the world and knowing about FoodShare to being an employee. Well, we know that there was a period of time where at FoodShare we had

mainly middle-class, university-educated white women working in management and in offices here. And then we had folks of colour working in our warehouse, on the trucks, and in low-wage work. I would say FoodShare is probably more diverse than lots and lots of other organizations *but* that diversity, there was a class-lens, a race-lens to that which we needed to acknowledge, understand, and appreciate. So, we've done a lot of work looking at the transition and thinking about how—where does unchecked bias pop up, how do we work to dismantle that, and how do we do that within the system? Because we will often default to those biases. We're still working on it. Every week we're doing something differently and we're taking it back to our advisory committee.

EP: But you can only do that work with an explicit commitment to basically hold each other accountable. It's implicit bias because it's implicit and you don't know it's there!

PT: Exactly, exactly. The food justice language, the new strategic plan—I spent a lot of time being curious and unearthing things and throwing some things in the air and seeing the things—like the right to food language seemed to stick for folks, and people really wanted us to stay focused on the right to food. And then peeling that away—then there's this idea of food justice and how does that lack of food justice impede the right to food, as two key pieces, and just that continued commitment to *push* and demand better of others and ourselves. So that's been really neat.

But I was going to say one thing earlier. There are a couple of conversations that we're showing up in, that as an organization that calls ourselves the largest food security organization, that we weren't necessarily in before. We are recognizing that even though there may be a place for someone to go and purchase food in their neighbourhood, we recognize that the policing of bodies of color has an impact on who *actually* gets to purchase. So not only do we have these systemic pieces that direct folks from equity-seeking groups into low-wage work, but we also have these systems that act to create uncomfortable, unsafe, highly policed experiences when accessing something that's a right.

Also, I'm really excited about something we're doing in October. We're launching a photo exhibit that features part of our food system that organizations rarely talk about. Dishwashers. So, we have a photo exhibit of dishwashers in their dish pits. And, also having a panel discussion to go with the photo exhibit launch. We're inviting the folks from Fifteen and Fairness to participate alongside us and talk about the type of work that we're creating in our food system, particularly unseen work.

EP: I have so many questions. I'm curious about how you came to your analysis of these issues?

PT: Good question.

EP: You said earlier it probably started being born Black.

PT: And poor.

EP: Yeah, Black and poor and not seeing those beautiful fruit displays. Could you say a little more about your education and experiences that have led you to this incredibly clear—so clear and so strong—analysis? Fierce, in a good way.

PT: Wow, thank you. I don't actually know. I think it's just the path—I'm absolutely curious. The most important education I've ever had was the time that I spent being poor and hungry. Those experiences have equipped me more than anything else to do this work. And I mean some of the little nitty gritty that people are

afraid to talk about, that I feel like I'm no longer living in poverty, no longer food insecure. And I know that some people in our society, lots of people in our society, they bestow shame on those folks. So, I feel pretty comfortable talking about those experiences, and it's informed my work in such a big way. For example, one of the things I often talk to people about is when I was a kid and we didn't have food to eat at lunch. I would go for a long walk and hide the fact that I was hungry so that no one could see. And I think it really helps people appreciate the shame that we bestow and how even *children* engage with that, from an early age. When we think about some of our programs, although they're food-based interventions—things like our Good Food markets—they really create an opportunity to engage people in leadership. In their communities. It's not unlike food banks in that food is being brought to communities, but it's *sold* to communities. So that's a little bit different. And the food is certainly different, it's produce. But what's really neat is we're helping cultivate community leaders who are trying to solve something in their community. One of the things I'm really curious about is how do we help those community leaders have a space to engage with conversations around policy, and work alongside us to advocate for policy-based interventions and not food-based interventions? So, we're starting to do things like challenge the premier to live on the rolled-back minimum wage. We challenged him, and said, "if you think that's good enough for Ontarians, you should live on $14 per hour for the remainder of your term."

You asked me how I came to be doing this. And I think it's just people that I've connected with over the years, and following my nose. So, when I ended up in Vancouver, I ended up at an organization called the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, in the downtown east side, where there is a significant amount of food charity that spans maybe ten blocks, if not more. A lot of which is traditional charity, a lot of lineups for stale bread and salty soup and day-old Starbucks muffins. I thought, "this is just terrible!" The Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House that was saying, "wait a minute, charity is not the answer. We need to be talking about the right to food." And how could programming be based on the right to food? And then what does that mean in terms of our responsibility to advocate, if we're operating from a right to food framework? And I just said, "oh, sign me up." I learned *so* much organizing and working alongside low-income homeless folks and other activists, pushing for better.

EP: In your strategic plan, there's a statement that says "food insecurity is complex." Can you tell me about that?

PT: Mmm. I think that's our nudge to acknowledge that it's not about lack of food. And it's affected by things like the colour of your skin, where you live, what your last name is, all of those things that impede someone's ability to get a job. It's more complex than, I think, the current narrative around, "well, let's just take the food that's going to go into the garbage and let's just bring it to poor people." Why don't we bring it to rich people? And take the food out of rich people's fridges and their bank accounts—increase their taxes alongside that—and bring that to the rest of Canada. It's this idea, again, this middle-class bias where people are deciding what they think is better for low-income people. I rarely ever hear low-income people say, "really, what I would like is someone's leftovers." I don't think I've *ever* heard someone say that *(both laugh)*. "Really what I'm dreaming for today is just a quarter of that sandwich that someone didn't eat…." That's wild. Or, some bruised pears or a carrot with three legs. These are all other people coming up with programs and projects that they think will work for low-income people.

And that's why listening is so important. But even sometimes when you listen—I did some work in BC where we would ask people things like, "so how do you feel about the food that you get at the food bank?" They'd say, "oh, it's so wonderful, and without the food bank, I don't know what I would do." You've probably seen this, you prod a little bit, "no, you can say it's shit. You can say it's always peanut butter and tuna, no fruits and vegetables. You can say what you really think"—and then people just open up.

EP: But the expectation that they should be grateful for the castoffs.

PT: Mhmm, mhmm. It's wild. We had so much tinned cranberry sauce growing up, in cupboards. Talk about food surplus. There was a surplus of cranberry sauce, always. And there was always more peanut butter. We always had two or three jars of peanut butter going before that one would finish.

EP: Are there foods you don't eat anymore because of that? Like canned cranberry sauce, maybe?

PT: Definitely not, yup, don't do any canned cranberry sauce. There's lots of foods but mainly because of the impacts it's had on my health and other people's health. I'm a diabetic and we spent years eating other people's castoffs. We spent years eating the subsidized no-nutrient food-like substance that is being sold as food. It's like corporations are making that food available at food banks. That's the food that's marked down. That's the food that there's a coupon for. So, they are creating this, normalizing the access to this type of food and expectation of this type of food. So, I think a lot of those things, I just refuse to participate in, as best as I can. I'm fortunate enough to be able to afford purchasing the things I want to eat and make my own food choices. Now.

EP: Earlier, you made a reference to the faith-based food programming. Could you say more about the problems you see with that?

PT: So, when I was a kid, I went to a place called the Scott Mission, at Spadina and College. I think my mother sent me there because they had a subsidized daycare on top of the soup kitchen and homeless drop-in downstairs. Which meant, again, another wonderful education. People being people, you can't pay for that kind of education. One of the things that would happen is—my best friend and his mother had come here from Iran. She wore a hijab and I was absolutely befuddled as I saw my [Muslim] friend sitting and praying with me at the Scott Mission and singing Johnny Appleseed before we could have lunch. When I reflect on it, there were subtle ways in which we were being introduced to Christianity and it was a part of the process around accessing the charity. It is essential to any food program that there are no strings attached. I don't want to listen to—this is not one of those situations where I listen to this presentation about your vacation property and then you give me something, I don't want *any* of that. I just want to eat, and I think when any other type of group gets involved in working to address some of these issues, we have to be really critical and ask, "what are their motivations? And what is the impact of the way in which they do that? What does that impact have on people?".

EP: Do you think there's a way to engage faith-based people who are doing food work, from whatever motivates them from their faith—I guess I'm curious if you think there's a way to engage them in broader discussion?

PT: Absolutely. Absolutely. I got involved with an organization that I had so much fun with in Vancouver called the Metro Vancouver Alliance. First time I'd ever done anything like this—the organizing model is based on what I've since learned is the Saul Alinsky model of organizing. And it had four pillars in terms of who we worked with. It started with trade unions. Trade unions, faith-based groups, community organizations, and then eventually academia. So, thinking about the places where people go to seek meaning in life. And training and supporting folks within those institutions to be leaders in their institutions and in their movement together. And what we did is we trained folks to animate listening campaigns in their institutions. So, they went off and we did months and months and months of training—whether it was a large group, small one-on-one conversation, but how do you listen in a way that helps draw out key issues and helps you identify what are the issues that people want to work on and creates a mechanism to be able to get to know each other within these institutions. And then brought those leaders together for a discernment meeting in advance of a municipal election. And people shared, from all of the institutions. There was a lot of organizing that went into this. The Metro Vancouver Alliance represented about 600,000 people. So, then we had a discernment meeting where we listed what people were hearing and gave opportunities for people to say: based on what you were hearing, now I've got this big list, which ones do you want to prioritize? We selected four through that process, very democratic process. They were social isolation, poverty, transportation, and housing.

We formed research action teams out of each of the four issues, including people working together that had never worked together before. And what they did, these research action teams, is they looked at—they didn't recreate the wheel—but they looked at work that other people were doing or models that may have been working or often policy-based interventions. Really what they were looking for was a policy opportunity *at* the municipal level to advance these issues. Each group came up with those, brought it back to the whole group. There was a lot of sharing around how they got to that place. Then we had an election accountability assembly where we invited leaders of all the municipal parties—because in Vancouver there are local parties—and then did a lot of work to encourage people to come. We had about a thousand people in a room which is *powerful*.

EP: Wow.

PT: Yeah, this was one of the debates that the politicians couldn't avoid. So, we had a thousand people in the room representing so many people across the region and instead of political parties saying, "this is my platform," as is often the case, "which one of our platforms do you like?". This was a community-based platform where we said, "we want to see you, the poverty group, we want to see if you're elected, will you make the city of Vancouver a living wage employer?" And the debate really was, that's our question, this is why we think it's important, you have two minutes, yes or no. And every single one of them said yes. Gregor Robertson was elected as mayor. We followed up with him after that, the poverty group, and said, "congratulations, we really appreciated you coming to the election accountability assembly. We look forward to working with you to make the city of Vancouver a living wage employer." The city of Vancouver is now a living wage employer.

EP: That's pretty amazing.

PT: It's pretty cool. They were also a real leader in helping us encourage other municipalities to become

living wage employers. But that's one of the things we could be doing. There's so much we could be doing.

EP: Thank you so much, Paul. I so appreciate your energy and passion for justice.

Conclusion

"There's so much we could be doing." Paul's passion for listening to, learning from, and working with community members, and his apparently limitless imagination for how to change the everyday manifestations of oppression, is inspiring. His transformative work at FoodShare has pushed back against the pervasive Whiteness and class privilege of the alternative food movement (Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Chennault, 2022; Elliott et al., 2022; Kepkiewicz et al, 2015). The changes in FoodShare's hiring and employment practices, such as paying a living wage, implementing a salary ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees, and providing compensation for interviewees, point to the multiple, intersecting, and systemic ways in which structures of oppression operate—and how they can be changed.

Paul's intrepid campaign for food justice is an example of civil rights activist John Lewis' "good trouble"—shaking up the status quo for justice and equity—and a reminder of Arundhati Roy's declaration that "another world is not only possible, she's on her way." As he states, "it can be hard to have hope" that we can transform the structures and sites that create unequal access to food (FoodShare, 2022a). But Paul reminds us that by keeping connected and listening to communities, maintaining an open, curious heart and mind, and being willing to engage—relentlessly—in good trouble, "anything and everything can change for the better."

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Paul Taylor is an anti-poverty activist and was the Executive Director of FoodShare Toronto for six years. He ran for the NDP in the federal riding of Parkdale-High Park in 2019 and 2021. In 2020, Paul was named one of Toronto Life's 50 Most Influential Torontonians (Toronto Life, 2020), was awarded the Top 40 under 40 in Canada (Block, 2020), and was voted Best Activist by the readers of Now Magazine (Bloomberg, 2020). He is the co-founder and principal consultant of Evenings & Weekends Consulting (n.d.).

Elaine Power is a Professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Studies at Queen's University and has been researching food insecurity for almost thirty years. She is the co-editor of *Messy eating: Conversations on animals as food* (King et al., 2019), *Feminist food studies* (Parker et al., 2019) and *Neoliberal governance and health: Duties, risks and vulnerabilities* (Polzer & Power, 2016), and co-author of *Acquired tastes: Why families eat the way they do* (Beagan et al., 2014). Her most recent book, co-authored with Jamie Swift, is *The case for basic income: Freedom, security, justice* (Swift & Power, 2021).

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Perspective

"Eating is a hustle": The complex realities of food in federal prison

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Abstract

Juxtaposing insights from the academic literature with those drawn from lived experience, this *Perspective* article explores the role of food in federal prisons in Canada. Highlighting its multiple meanings and uses, we underscore the complexity of food in prison as well as its fundamental importance in shaping the overall experience of incarceration. Rather than following the more traditional format of an academic article, our discussion takes the form of a conversation and collective reflection between the three of co-authors.

Keywords: Carceral food systems; prison food; federal prisons; carceral geographies

Résumé

Mêlant des visions issues de la littérature spécialisée et d'expériences vécues, cet article *Perspective* explore le rôle de l'alimentation dans les prisons fédérales du Canada. En nous attardant à ses multiples significations et usages, nous mettons en lumière la complexité de l'alimentation dans les prisons aussi bien que son importance fondamentale dans l'expérience globale d'incarcération. Plutôt que de se mouler au modèle traditionnel de l'article scientifique, cette discussion prend la forme d'une conversation réflexive entre les trois auteurs.

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In this *Perspective* article we discuss the role of food in federal prisons in Canada, juxtaposing insights from the academic literature with those drawn from lived experience. Our objective is to put lived experience and academic knowledge on equal footing, highlighting areas of convergence, but also dissonance, in how prison food is understood and experienced. Ultimately, we show the complexity of food in prison—its multiple meanings and uses, as well as its fundamental importance in shaping the overall experience of incarceration.

Rather than following the more traditional format of an academic article, our discussion takes the form of a conversation and collective reflection between the three of us. It is not a transcript of an actual verbal conversation; rather the conversation style format was used to create a space for the co-authors to engage in a shared reflection on their own experiences and learnings (drawing from lived experience and academic research). Specifically, we draw inspiration from Snelgrove et al. (2014), among others, who have used the conversational style to foreground reflection and mutual learning within academic writing. Initially, each of the authors prepared written notes and reflections individually, that were then put into conversation with one another through a series of edits undertaken by each author.

The three co-authors are all involved in a research project exploring food as a site of contestation and possibility within federal prisons in Canada (one as the Principal Investigator, and two as Research Assistants). One of us was formerly incarcerated, one of us conducted an extensive literature review on this topic and one of us has been engaged on researching the connections between prisons and food systems for the past two years. Two of us are white women settlers, and a third is a Canadian male of Middle Eastern descent.

Amanda: Ghassan, why don't you start by telling us a bit about your experience of food in prison.

Ghassan: I served two and a half years in federal prison. During that time, I experienced virtually every aspect of prison food. I ate in the cafeteria, I cooked my own food, I had a garden, and I worked in the kitchen. In the four years since I was released, I've reflected on my experiences with food. Every morning, I eat breakfast, pack a lunch, and head to work or school. Once my day is finished, I will go to the gym and finally home. After a long day of work, it is time to relax and replenish my body with a delicious meal. To most people, having a good dinner is not a luxury; I am in a position where I have food security. I often take food security for granted. I can cook at home, go to my favourite restaurant, or eat at my mother's house.

Food is one of the essential elements in my daily life. Without food, I cannot study, work out, or function effectively at work. Last week, we had a tornado in Ottawa that caused us to lose power. I could not cook anything and was extremely grumpy and hungry even though I had not missed any prior meals. I missed just one meal and was a little cranky. This reminded me about some of my time in prison. In prison, you have to get accustomed to the feeling of hunger.

My favourite foods are steak, chicken burgers, shrimp, basmati rice, sushi, smoked ribs, watermelon, and mangoes. Many of the foods I avoid today were frequently served in the prison cafeteria. Keep me away from: roast beef, chicken teriyaki, tuna, and salmon from cans, tuna casserole, apples, and Basa fish. In prison, those were the meals I was fed often, and they were of poor quality. For instance, the Basa fish had no taste and would disintegrate immediately in my mouth. The roast beef was often impossible to chew, and the tuna casserole had an unpleasant smell. Having worked in a kitchen, the tuna casserole and slop (chicken or pork) were the two

meals that were often discarded because prisoners would avoid them. If you were served the pork slop, most people found it revolting because it smelled so bad; nobody ever asked for seconds of the slop. In the case of the chicken slop, some people would wash it in a strainer so they could re-cook it on the prison range.

Amanda: Your experience echoes a lot of what is written in the literature about prison food.

Julie: Definitely. Incarcerated individuals often describe food as tasteless, of bad quality, repetitive, as having a revolting odor, too small portions, and overall, as being unappetizing and as the opposite of 'proper food' (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016; Gibson-Light, 2018; Jones, 2017; Parson, 2020; Smoyer & Lopes, 2017; Vanhouche, 2015; Watkins, 2013). Often, food is made to be filling but intentionally disgusting (Jones, 2017). The lack of power over their own consumption of food can leave incarcerated folks so hungry, materially and symbolically, to the point that Smoyer and Blankenship (2017) describe hunger as a geography of prison in and of itself. This shows how food is used as a tool of repression and punishment by the institution (Smoyer & Lopes, 2017; Stearns, 2019).

Ghassan: Neither the staff nor the guards ever ate any of the prison food, and the guards would often say that they would not feed this food to their dogs. In one prison, they would only offer fresh fruit for breakfast because barely anyone would show up. For lunch and dinner, it was always canned fruits that nobody wanted. They also served canned shredded pineapple that nobody ever ate.

Julie: I've read of similar things in the literature. Banning certain foods, like coffee or spices (Jones, 2017), reducing the caloric content, hot meals and frequency of meat, relying on soy, processed food and carbs are all cost-cutting practices, but they can also be seen as a form of mistreatment (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016; Jones, 2017). The many problems of the food service are compounded by high canteen prices and extremely low wages for incarcerated workers (Gibson-Light, 2018). This makes it difficult for incarcerated individuals to supplement their diet with food from the canteen that might be sustaining or pleasurable to them.

In this context, food can easily be used as a tool of punishment and conformity; offering comfort food as a bribe to encourage certain behaviours or refusing access to the canteen or shared kitchen as a reprimand (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016; Earle & Philips, 2012). Control is exercised over when, where, with whom, what and how to eat (Brisman, 2008; Smoyer & Lopes, 2017; Parson, 2020; Ugelvik, 2011). The control over food can go as far as force-feeding people who are on hunger-strike, revoking their political agency in an attempt to seek domination over their bodies (Brisman, 2008).

Amanda: When talking about food in federal prison, it's important to distinguish between the various types of food service within federal prisons, as the experience is quite different, particularly in relation to what you just mentioned Ghassan in terms of control and autonomy. There are what CSC [Correctional Service Canada] calls Central Feeding where food is served in a cafeteria, either in a line or on pre-set trays. Then there is also Small Group Meal Preparation (SGMP) where individuals are given a weekly budget with which to purchase groceries from a pre-determined list to cook their own food. Finally, there is Tray Service, when food is portioned onto trays and served to incarcerated individuals in their cells. Ghassan, I know you experienced both the cafeteria and the grocery model.

Ghassan: In prisons with a cafeteria, the food is not edible, but you don't have a choice. You will suffer and struggle in this jail because eating is a hustle. The best meals are the days with hot dogs, and grilled cheese. Pizza day was hit or miss, sometimes it was good, other times, it was overcooked. The canteen is very important in these jails because we would use it to supplement our diet. We often use the microwave for cooking meals. We would put some rice in Tupperware, fill it with water and margarine then cook it in the microwave. For the main course, we would empty a can of chickpeas and beans and add onions and green pepper that we either picked from our salads or someone stole from the kitchen. Add whatever spice is available, usually curry, then blast that in the microwave for at least 30 minutes. The rice and curry beans were a nice meal to finish your day.

Amanda: That example really illustrates the creativity of incarcerated folks in the face of really challenging experiences. It shows that food is not just a tool of oppression, it is also tool of adaptation and persistence.

Ghassan: Full grocery prisons are where everyone wants to go. They give you enough weekly budget to buy and cook your food; in some cases, some people may not even use their entire budget. Based on my experience, there is nothing to complain about the food if you are in this prison. For example, I was able to order food and make fried chicken, lentil soup, beef stew, pancakes, and chicken burgers. Some prisons have both a cafeteria and grocery. Some units go to the cafeteria and others can order groceries. You must work your way up to the units with groceries, usually after four months of good behaviour. I remember the day they called my name to come to the unit, I was so happy.

Amanda: The grocery model definitely seems much better, but I have heard complaints about the weekly budget—that the amount provided isn't keeping up with increasing food costs, meaning folks have less and less purchasing power (Wilson, 2022; Fayter & Payne, 2017). In an effort to create consistency between what is served through the National Menu and what is available through the SGMP, some items have also been removed from the grocery list, reducing the range of choice folks have available to them (Comité des détenus, 2017; National Menu and Recipe Committee, 2019).

Ghassan: In jails with a grocery, there is an underground economy where people with groceries will sell you their groceries or meals. I used to buy a carton of eggs for $6 worth of junk food, or someone may make me a turkey dinner with rice and vegetables. Purchasing food from others was not permitted, so the guards would sometime raid the fridge and confiscate the raw food.

Amanda: I think we can see this underground economy that you describe as a form of resistance, as you note Ghassan, selling or trading food, even sharing food isn't permitted. Informal collective cooking can also be a way for people to express their culture and identify, or really just to meet their basic nutritional needs.

Julie: Food provides one of the few ways to express and perform one's culture and identity while in prison (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016). For instance, Earle and Philips (2012) speak of the cooking area in prison as the only place where ethnicity can be freely expressed and where ethnic groups can assemble and share food, resources, and conversation. The shared kitchen is one of the only ways for incarcerated individuals to gain access to culturally appropriate meals, which aren't always available or sufficient within the canteen or food service. Further the shared kitchens afford incarcerated individuals a certain level of control over the preparation of these foods. Certain cultural foods, however, remain

inaccessible, such as some traditional foods for Indigenous peoples (e.g., wild meats, foraged food etc.).

Ghassan: We were able to access other cultures mainly through spices. Generally, we obtained spices (Curry, Garam Masala, Jerk seasoning) through cultural food drives, but Curry was available at the canteen. I remember guys from the Caribbean made amazing dumpling. When we had a good meal, we would finish off the sauce by cleaning our plate with the dumplings. There was also an older man, Ali, from Guyana, and he made the most amazing curry fish with that horrible Basa I mentioned earlier. In prison, it was a mood changer to have his food. I always brought him ingredients and he would make me a plate from time to time.

Julie: Transforming meals, the Basa fish into the curry fish to take Ghassan's example, is one of the resistance practices given in the literature. Resistance should be thought of as a continuum of acts that challenge power relationships and resist and contest authority (Vanhouche, 2015; Ugelvik, 2011). These practices can be overt or hidden as well as individual or collective (Godderis, 2006; Smoyer, 2016) and can be directed towards a specific person or an abstraction, like incarceration (Brisman, 2008). For Godderis (2006), collective practices of resistance can be legitimate, like buying groups that are organized for different ethnic groups so that they have access to culturally adequate foods. They can also be illegitimate, such as stealing food (Gibson-Light, 2018; Smoyer, 2015a), foraging (Watkins, 2013), securing more food at the cafeteria (Smoyer, 2016), hoarding (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016), and sharing food and food related items (De Graaf & Kilty, 2016; Smoyer, 2014; Watkins, 2013).

These collected ingredients are then transformed to create food that is more enjoyable and significant, and importantly, food that can be eaten on their own terms (Cate, 2008; Gibson-Light, 2018; Smoyer, 2016; Smoyer & Blankenship, 2014; Stearns, 2019). Ghassan's example shows many collective resistance practices, where the Basa fish meal is moved from the cafeteria to Ali's cell, and ingredients hoarded and shared in order to be cooked into the tasty curry dish.

Amanda: By engaging in these forms of resistance, incarcerated individuals can exercise agency and gain autonomy over their bodies and their identity, providing a way to resist, sometimes in small ways, the control and authority imposed by the institution.

Ghassan: I mean, we resisted because we were starving, there was no other choice. I was really into following the rules so I could get paroled, but sometimes I stole onions from the kitchens along with spices. Sometimes we stole as a group. To be honest, we were just so hungry, and we just did not want to feel that way before going to sleep.

We also had some people that we could always rely on when we were hungry. It was a support system. I remember this one guy Salim, he was in his cell, and I had just bought two beef sausages from the inmate committee. They were not halal, but we were so hungry that we did not care. I barged into his room and I said, "I GOT FOOD." He made me laugh, saying "I was so hungry, I was moaning, and I was praying to God for something to eat, and [then] you came in."

Amanda: There's a strong sense of solidarity and community in what you describe.

Julie: Agreed. The creation of relationships of solidarity and a sense of community around food is explained in the literature as a reaction to the poor quality and low quantity of food, which echoes what you've just

described (Parson, 2020; Smoyer, 2014; Smoyer, 2016; Watkins, 2013). People come together in order to resist the conditions of incarceration, in this case, through food. This seems to be especially present for women and racialized groups (Cate 2008; Earle & Philips, 2012; Smoyer, 2015b; Stearns, 2019; Watkins, 2013). In this way, prison food is a punishment, but it also brings them together.

Ghassan: I was the president of the Muslim club. I remember the first time I went to the Frontenac cafeteria, I asked for a halal meal and the cook gave it to me in a blue tray. He looked at me weird, but I did not think much about it. Later at night, he knocked on my door and told me he was Muslim as well and had made me a really nice cake. I knew if I was ever hungry, all I had to do was knock on his door for food. There were a lot of inmates converting to Islam in prison; until they got their paperwork to receive halal meals, many of us would donate our meals to them to make sure they got halal meals.

In the Muslim group, there were people from every culture, so this helped us create alliances with everyone else. A lot of the time, we would cook meals and give them to those who are hungry. We also had some people donate their purchases from the Christmas drive to people serving life sentences who had no family. Thinking about it, food was a very powerful bond and we always made sure to look out for each other, but it was not limited to only the Muslim group. For instance, every club also was able to order supplies like different coffees, teas, chips etc. Sometimes non-Muslims wanted a particular item they couldn't get, so we would buy it and they would pay us back at cost.

Julie: In the literature, Smoyer (2019) emphasized that food shapes both physical and social spaces. For instance, in maximum security or segregation cells, food is usually received on a tray and eaten alone in one's cell. Smoyer & Blankenship (2014) argue that while this may at first bring a sense of security, it can quickly devolve into boredom (Smoyer & Blankenship, 2014). The cafeteria in contrast, is a space where incarcerated individuals can socialize and perform their identities (Godderis, 2006; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998).

Ghassan: Actually, when I was in prison, one of the best feelings was going back to my cell at night and waiting for the lights to be turned off. During the day, you must deal with the prison employees, your personal issues, and the prisoners' politics; it is exhausting. Finally, you don't have to deal with parole officers, corrections officers, other inmates, or prison politics. Now, I felt safe, and all I wanted was to get a decent meal. If I was lucky, I would have a nice dinner in my cell while watching television before bed. It's beautiful to fall asleep with food in your stomach, knowing that that day is over, and it is one day less before going home.

Eating in a cafeteria can also be dangerous. You might sit at someone's table or get into it with the kitchen staff because the servings were small. I remember one guy wanted some of the food that I was not going to eat, he asked me in an aggressive tone, and I would have looked weak if I gave it to him. So, it went into the garbage, and we fought once we went back to our range.

Amanda: This is interesting; I imagine both scenarios can be true for different people at different times depending on the circumstances of their incarceration and their own individual journey. This reminds me of something that comes up a lot in discussions of food in prison, the lack of choice or control. Something as simple as the choice to eat alone or eat with others could have a real impact of the lives of incarcerated folks.

Julie: This connects to something Smith (2002) and Watkins (2013) talk about; when people who are incarcerated have the opportunity to decide and prepare what they want to eat, they experience a heightened sense of pleasure, catharsis, and empowerment.

Ghassan: Definitely. It is common to take comfort from food while in prison as there is not much to look forward to.

Amanda: From what you're saying Ghasan, it sounds like food was a refuge, a way to temporary escape and have a moment to yourself.

Julie: This makes me think of one of the categories of food-related resistance described by Godderis (2006), what they call individual adjustments. Individual adjustments are conscious decisions made in order to soothe the pain of imprisonment. They can be cognitive tricks that use food to transform or temporarily escape the experience of imprisonment (Smoyer & Minke, 2019), or practices that repurpose food to accommodate prison life (Brisman, 2008; Collins, 2009). For example, indulging in comfort food was a common practice amongst the women interviewed by De Graaf & Kilty (2016) to respond to the pain and stress of imprisonment and to re-establish control over their bodies.

Ghassan: One of my favorite moments was when we had a garden, and I grew coriander. One meal that a lot of prisoners have is Mr. Noodle and it gets really boring. But, add fresh coriander to it and it becomes a new experience. So, I would make my soup and watch 'Parts Unknown' with Anthony Bourdain, I remember being so relaxed in those moments, seeing him travel and eat in different parts of the world.

Amanda: Food can provide an opportunity for incarcerated individual to symbolically escape the institution for a brief moment, but also to push back in small everyday ways against the carceral system. It can also build community; I'm thinking of the example you gave earlier Ghasan, of preparing a meal together, using a few basic items purchased at the canteen. There are these small, but important moments to gain autonomy over your food—even if it is just microwaved rice and spices!

One thing that I think is important to remember is that because our relationship to food is so multifaceted, it is impossible to capture the richness and diversity of everyone's experience. Just in talking the three of us, we've seen instances where Ghassan, your own experience isn't quite reflected in the broader literature, just as it is probably fair to say that someone else who was incarcerated at the same time, in the same institution, might have had a similar, but not identical experience of food than yours. What we can do, is highlight common insights to deepen our understanding and identify possible openings for change and collective action.

Ghassan: Food in prison is complicated. It is a hustle that requires significant planning, involving re-cooking food, buying food from others, supplementing with canteen, and sometimes, having a garden. If you want to know more about my prison experiences, I invite you to read my article on the website of the Research Centre for Social Innovation and Transformation, which also has a video of my seminar presentation.

Through this dialogue, our intention has been to highlight the complexities and intricacies of prison food, but also to illustrate the importance of breaking down the barriers and siloes that often structure our understandings (or lack of understanding) of the lived realities within prisons. The mutual learnings that

become possible when we engage in shared reflection are crucial to deepening that understanding and represent a first step in working towards a reimagining of prison food, and indeed, prisons more broadly.

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Original Research Article

Barriers and supports to traditional food access in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia)

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Abstract

Canada is a signatory nation on international covenants, conventions, and declarations supporting the human right to food, but has not granted constitutional protection thereof. Failure to uphold the right to food contributes to unacceptably high levels of food insecurity that vary geographically and demographically, undermines health, and creates structural obstacles to food system sustainability. It is well recognized that Indigenous populations in Canada face disproportionately high rates of food insecurity compared to non-Indigenous people, and little attention is paid to the Indigenous conceptions of food security, including access to traditional food systems. The purpose of this research was to better understand the importance of, as well as barriers and supports that exist in accessing traditional food for Indigenous Peoples in Nova Scotia. Two focus groups were held with individuals who identify as Indigenous (n=16), one for those who live within a First Nations community and one for those who live outside of a First Nations community, in Nova Scotia. Focus groups were held in a talking circle format to facilitate discussion on traditional food access. Focus groups were transcribed and analyzed using the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework to understand in a culturally relevant way, how traditional foods impact Indigenous Nova Scotians' health. Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model was used to locate barriers and supports to traditional food. Supports identified were community engagement, consultations and partnerships, and strength of cultural values. Barriers included knowledge transmission, lack of community, land access, cost, programs and policies, and identity loss. Nuances specific to each community are discussed. Both supports and challenges exist for traditional food access in Nova Scotia; however, barriers outweighed supports in both number and magnitude. Stronger community and

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political partnerships, as well as consultations with Indigenous Peoples by public and private sector developers are necessary to develop upstream solutions to traditional food access.

Keywords: Traditional food; access; community; nutrition

Résumé

Le Canada est un des pays signataires des conventions, déclarations et accords internationaux qui promeuvent le droit humain à l'alimentation, mais il n'en a pas fait un droit protégé par sa constitution. L'échec à respecter le droit à l'alimentation contribue à causer des niveaux inacceptables d'insécurité alimentaire qui varient géographiquement et démographiquement, cela mine la santé et crée des obstacles structurels à la souveraineté des systèmes alimentaires. Il est bien reconnu que les populations autochtones du Canada font face à des niveaux disproportionnés d'insécurité alimentaire par rapport à la population non autochtone; peu d'attention est accordée aux conceptions de la sécurité alimentaire chez les Autochtones, cela inclut l'accès aux systèmes alimentaires traditionnels. L'intention de cette recherche était de mieux comprendre l'importance des obstacles et des appuis qui existent lorsque les peuples autochtones de Nouvelle-Écosse cherchent à accéder à leur nourriture traditionnelle. Deux groupes témoins ont été formés avec des individus s'identifiant comme Autochtones (n=16) : un avec ceux vivant dans une communauté des Premières Nations et un avec ceux vivant en dehors d'une telle communauté, en Nouvelle-Écosse. Les groupes ont pris la forme de cercles de parole pour faciliter la discussion sur l'accès à l'alimentation traditionnelle. Ces discussions ont été transcrites puis analysées au moyen du Cadre d'évaluation de la roue de médecine afin de comprendre d'une manière culturellement pertinente la manière dont les aliments traditionnels influencent la santé des Autochtones de Nouvelle-Écosse. Le modèle écosystémique de Bronfenbrenner a été utilisé pour identifier les obstacles et les appuis à l'alimentation traditionnelle. Les appuis identifiés étaient l'engagement, les consultations et les partenariats dans la communauté ainsi que la force des valeurs culturelles. Les obstacles incluaient la transmission du savoir, l'absence de la communauté, l'accès à des terres, les coûts, les programmes et les politiques et la perte identitaire. Des nuances propres à chaque communauté sont discutées. Ainsi, il y a à la fois des appuis et des défis pour accéder à l'alimentation traditionnelle en Nouvelle-Écosse; cependant, les obstacles surpassent les appuis par leur nombre et leur ampleur. Des communautés plus fortes et des partenariats politiques, de même que des consultations auprès des peuples autochtones de la part des promoteurs des secteurs privés et publics s'avèrent nécessaires pour concevoir des solutions en amont qui ouvriraient l'accès à l'alimentation traditionnelle.

Land Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge that we live, work and study in the unceded territory of Mi'kma'ki. Unceded means that treaties were signed between the British and Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy nations between 1725 and 1752, known as the Peace and Friendship treaties. These were not a surrendering of lands or resources. For Indigenous Peoples there is no separation between people and land. It is not an ownership; it is a relationship. This relationship is guided by *Netukulimk*, which guides sustainable practices for the next seven generations, never taking more than needed and wasting nothing. Netukulimk is critical to sustainable food security.

Despite this, settlers and governments have, over 400 years, and continue to breach treaty responsibilities and accountability. As a result, there are thirteen Indigenous communities across Nova Scotia that make up only 0.02 percent of the entire land mass in Nova Scotia, and a large population of urban, off-reserve, and/or non-status Indigenous People. This acknowledgement is to recognize how historical and current injustices are inseparable from the issues studied and shared in this article. We are all treaty people. On this land, we all have accountability in upholding natural laws and understanding our rights and responsibilities. Land acknowledgements are not just something we say, it's something we do. Pjalasi—come in and take your place.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to share results which explore the importance of traditional food for Indigenous Peoples living in the part of Mi'kma'ki that is Nova Scotia, and to discuss barriers and supports to accessing traditional food in the context of human rights and sustainability.

Traditional Food Access, Food Security, and Human Rights

Canada is a party to many international covenants and conventions which expressly recognize the right to food (United Nations [UN], 1948, 1966a, 1966b, 1979, 1990). Canada also endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which provides for protection of Indigenous rights (United Nations Indigenous Peoples, 2017). Domestically, Canada protects Indigenous rights under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. Canada's public facing image is one of a nation that supports rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to food.

Despite these commitments and recommendations, Indigenous Peoples experience disproportionately high rates of household food insecurity compared to non-Indigenous people (Tarasuk et al., 2014); however, current data may underestimate the magnitude of inequity because Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve are underrepresented in food security studies (Elliott et

al., 2012), despite the growth of the Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2015), and because of increasing incidences of Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Furthermore, little attention is paid to traditional food or concepts which reflect a conceptualization of food security from an Indigenous perspective, such as ability to access and participate in traditional food systems (Elliott et al., 2012; Power, 2008). This lack of attention in research could reflect the past practices of colonialism that supported the integration of Indigenous Peoples through assimilation of culture. As a result of historic practices of assimilation, Indigenous populations experience both limited service provision and services that fail to account for Indigenous perspectives of health and wellbeing (Adelson, 2005). In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released a report that documents historical injustices and suggests an Indigenous-led pathway to achieving some of these national commitments (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

An understanding of the importance of traditional food is crucial due the connection between culture and health (Bodirsky & Johnson, 2008). Traditional food is recognized for its importance to indigenous cultures and physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological wellbeing (Mundel, 2008), and has been in policy realms for some time. As far back as 1998, *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security: In Response to the World Food Summit Plan of Action*, expressly recognized the importance of hunting, fishing and gathering in traditional food access and the associated knowledge of natural resources and sustainable harvesting practices, as being important to achieving food security within Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998). Today, Food Secure Canada advocates for the continued exposure of youth to the symbolic and spiritual value of traditional food (Food Secure Canada, 2012).

Nova Scotia has the highest provincial rate of household food insecurity: 15.3 percent compared to a national average of 12.7 percent (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2017). Recent estimates by the First Nations Food, Nutrition, and Environment Survey put the prevalence of food insecurity among First Nations communities at 48 percent in Canada and 39 percent in Atlantic Canada (Chan et al., 2019). The experience of food insecurity is likely to be amplified in Nova Scotia's Indigenous population, from the documented rate, at the very least due to lower employment rates (Statistics Canada, 2015) and social disparities well documented by Chan et al. (2019). Equally important is the lack of inclusion of traditional food practices in the tools and definitions used to determine food security. There is currently a lack of information, published in the academic literature, describing traditional food access in Nova Scotia, though similar data are published elsewhere in Canada (Elliott et al., 2012; Skinner et al., 2013; Socha et al., 2012).

Work has begun to include the cost of traditional food in food costing (Food Secure Canada, 2015), but it is still in early stages. This suggests that, like Canadian statistics, food security statistics in Nova Scotia may give an inaccurate representation of the true state of food security, in particular from a cultural perspective. The state of food insecurity provides an indicator of the realization of the right to food. A richer understanding of traditional food in Indigenous communities in Nova Scotia is needed in order to address food insecurity and contribute to a food system in Canada where the right to food is upheld.

Traditional Food Access and Sustainability

Traditional food access is also inextricably linked to sustainable food systems, and therefore an issue to *all* Nova Scotians, as it has ripple effects across our shared social and ecological systems. The term sustainability means different things to different people across disciplines and worldviews, and most often includes concepts of sustaining ecological, sociocultural, and economic systems in perpetuity. One approach to understanding sustainability, which is useful in supporting diverse articulations of a sustainable society, is the principled definition used in the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) (Broman & Robèrt, 2017). According to FSSD theory, eight principles of sustainability set out concrete boundary conditions, or limits, of the ecological and social systems which support human existence as we know it. The principles delimit what is not sustainable, leaving creative freedom to express myriad sustainable societies within those boundaries. These principles are expressed intentionally as *negations* of violations to what biophysical and social sciences set out as the needs of ecological and social systems.

There are three principles governing ecological system sustainability, which state that in a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing: 1) concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust (e.g., fossil carbon and metals); 2) concentrations of substances produced by society (e.g., CFCs and plastics); and 3) degradation by physical means (e.g. the Indigenous concept of Netukulimk, applied to sustainable harvesting, means take what is needed and waste nothing, to ensure access for future generations).

There are five principles governing social system sustainability, which state that in a sustainable society, people are not subject to structural obstacles to: 4) health (e.g., by dangerous working conditions or insufficient rest from work); 5) influence (e.g., by suppression of free speech or neglect of opinions); 6) competence (e.g., by obstacles to education or insufficient possibilities for personal development); 7) impartiality (e.g., by discrimination or unfair selection to job positions); and 8) meaning-making (e.g., by suppression of cultural expression or obstacles to co-creation of purposeful conditions).

It is important to note that there are complex interactions between the social and ecological systems. For example, a violation of one principle often has dual or secondary effects on other principles; despite Canada's public-facing image as committed to international covenants that support the right to food (including traditional food), it is clear that social structures present barriers, or obstacles, to *impartial* realization of this *right*. In a sustainable society, people are not subject to structural obstacles to impartiality. These structural obstacles have spillover effects on health (by affecting food security), competence (by affecting development of traditional food skills) and meaning making (by impeding the expression of identity and culture through food).

In this article we first focus our attention on findings related to traditional food access, and then discuss them in the context of individual and community health (as defined by the Medicine Wheel Framework), the right to food (as per Canada's international commitments) and sustainability (as per FSSD principled approach).

Methods

Informed by comparable Canadian research (Elliott et al., 2012; Socha et al., 2012), we used a qualitative technique with two semi-structured focus groups consistent with Krueger's approach of designing and conducting focus groups (Kreuger, 2002) that was based in the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP). These principles are supportive of self-determination, as outlined by The National Indigenous Health Organization (NAHO]) (2004).

One focus group was held with members of a First Nations community (n=12) and another with self-identified Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve in the Annapolis Valley area (n=4). All participants in the Annapolis Valley focus group were female over the age of eighteen, while the First Nations community focus group contained both female and male participants over the age of eighteen.

Each focus group was co-facilitated by a leader within the identified community. The inclusion of a community-based co-facilitator served to share control over the development of questions, and the focus group process, ensuring self-determination in the research process. Self-determination is identified by NAHO (2004) as an important aspect of research as partnering communities have control over the research process and use of the research outcomes in ways best suited to the needs of the community.

Participants were asked, using a semi-structured interview guide, to describe the importance of traditional foods in their lives, the barriers they face in accessing it, and supports they can identify for accessing traditional foods. The focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After transcription, participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure the focus group dialogue was captured accurately. Requests for omissions of statements were also accepted. Researchers applied open coding processes to the transcripts. In a second round of analysis, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1994) and the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework (Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, 2018) were used to theme and contextualize the codes.

The Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework (Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, 2018) was applied to better understand how traditional food is important to its four interconnected quadrants: spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health. This framework was used to root the research in a holistic, Indigenous health paradigm.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 1977) was used to understand and locate where in participants' socioecological system barriers and supports lie. This model theorizes that an individual is part of a system that includes: the microsystem (interactions with family, peers, etc., in a setting), the mesosystem (interaction of factors and people from an individual's different microsystems), the exosystem (systems that indirectly impact an individual, through media, community, local services, policy etc.), and the macrosystem (norms, values, beliefs, social structures, culture etc.). Levels of the theory served as a priori categories for locating barriers and supports, while recognizing that they have important interactive effects between levels.

Discussions regarding supports and barriers were identified. These discussions were then individually assigned to a system, based on whether the support or

barrier was one that was tied to either the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner's model (1989) was used to consider the results of the focus groups in a way that helps locates where in system (at what level) supports or barriers lie, and therefore points of leverage. Furthermore, and like the Medicine Wheel Framework, Bronfenbrenner's model has an explicitly relational focus, helping to highlight how each level of the system interact and influence one another.

Trustworthiness was increased using member-checking and inter-coder reliability checks. Transcripts were returned to all participants for feedback. Inter-coder reliability was verified between two authors. Ethics approval for the research methods was granted by Acadia University's Research Ethics Board 15-41.

Results

Exploring the Importance of Traditional Food

Both groups identified traditional food as being important to physical health, encouraging and supporting traditional food practices for younger generations, spiritual practices, and stewardship of the land.

Participants noted the effects of a decreased inclusion of traditional food to illustrate the role that traditional food played in health. For example, participants connected decreased incorporation of traditional food to increased diabetes rates within communities. Comparing traditional to market food, one on-reserve participant pointed to the overall perceived healthfulness of traditional moose meat due to its lower fat content.

When looking towards younger generations, an off-reserve participant noted the importance of having "children…practice some of those traditions in [the] household," (OR5) and similarly on-reserve that "[participation in traditional food gathering] is important, especially for our younger generations, to pass on that knowledge to our younger generation" (GN9).

Traditional food was also strongly associated with spiritual practices such as ceremonial offerings of thanks. As expressed by a participant on-reserve: "And…ceremony too, you know, thanking the creator for the offerings to Mother Earth, for your moose or whatever it is that you got; that's very important to Mi'kmaq culture" (GN9).

Further to this, an on-reserve participant emphasized the role Indigenous Peoples played within the environmental context, as being "the stewards of the land and of the animals, and of the air and the water" (GN2). Stewardship and giving offerings of thanks played a role in the understanding that Earth's resources are to be respected and not over-extended, expressed by an off-reserve participant: "We would traditionally offer a tobacco pouch or some sort of sacred medicine to ask the spirit of the animal to leave the body before we chose to kill it for our family, and then it was only you would take what you need and every piece of the animal was used" (OR6).

The comparison of a traditional food system and a western food system was summarized by an on-reserve

participant as: "culture and tradition versus supply and demand" (GN2).

In summary, the importance of traditional food lies within the macrosystem of Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model (1994), as participants emphasized the connection between traditional food and building cultural knowledge bases within communities. This has a cascading and interactive effects at all system levels, such as passing on traditional food knowledge to children across family units (exosystem) and influencing individual health (microsystem).

When set in the context of the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, the importance of traditional food has clear links to all four quadrants. Values associated with traditional food promote stewardship of land and cultural teachings (spiritual), environmental awareness and hands-on skills of harvesting (physical), education of youth and leadership within adults (mental) and relationship building and knowledge sharing between families and within communities (emotional). This importance of the interrelatedness to all four aspects of the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework was found to permeate the results of this research, a finding which is supported by studies elsewhere (Elliott et al., 2012).

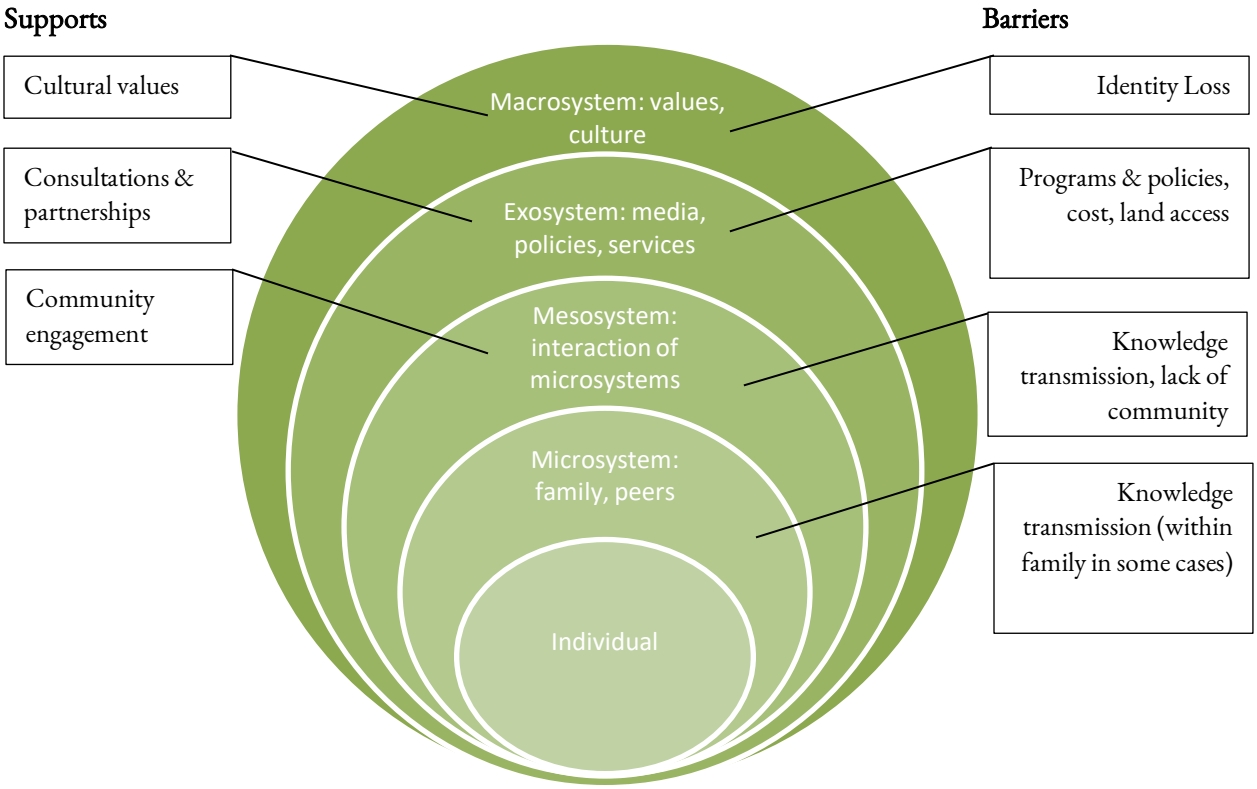
Summary of Barriers and Supports

The barriers to accessing traditional food, and existing supports, are summarized in Table 1. In Figure 1, they are presented as they relate to their location in the socioecological system that surrounds an individual. Following, they are described and explained, where possible using the language of the participants.

Table 1: Summary of Barriers and Supports for Indigenous Accesses to Traditional Foods

	Common Barrers to Both Communities	First Nations Community Dwellers	Those Dwelling Outside of First Nations Communities
Barriers	• historical identity loss • loss of traditional food knowledge and skills • education • private land ownership • land degradation in absence of accountability • federal resource policies	• development/construction • costs of accessing traditional foods	• limited knowledge circulation, resources and teachers • cost of accessing knowledge • limited community support • lack of programs
Supports	• strength of cultural values around the importance of traditional food • community engagement and activism in traditional food through, for example, events • consultations and partnerships		

Figure 1: Socioecological Barriers and Supports for Accessing Traditional Food



Barriers to Accessing Traditional Food

Barriers to accessing traditional food arose in both focus groups, with six central themes: knowledge transmission, lack of community, land access, cost, programs and policies, and identity loss. These are shown as per Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory levels of the socioecological system influencing the individual, in Figure 1.

Those living off-reserve highlighted knowledge-based barriers. A lack of educational resources and traditional teachers made it difficult to access needed traditional knowledge related to traditional food: "If we had more papers that people could read...some people can't afford books, so it would have to be things that are accessible through libraries and free things" (OR5).

This barrier of cost to accessing knowledge was mirrored by participants in both groups, preventing transmission of traditional knowledge, systematically reducing access to traditional food. A participant off-reserve stated there is a "cost in general" because "a lot of people who hold the knowledge...will charge you to...learn that" (OR5). Those on-reserve focused on the costs associated with hunting like ammunition and gun safety courses, licensing, and the increasing costs of transportation and accommodations which has become a required expense due the departure of moose from the area of the community.

Both groups identified a lack of self-identity and being ashamed of identifying as Indigenous in previous

generations as factors influencing the sharing of traditional knowledge around food and food practices, as captured in this quote from the off-reserve group: "There's also the thing where through the like 70s, 80s, and 90s where people did not self-identify as First Nations, they didn't pass along the information which therefore means probably the last twenty years or thirty years, people do not carry that information on how to access traditional foods which is a big barrier" (OR2).

Specific to those living off-reserve, lack of community was brought up as one barrier to food sharing and other solutions used to address traditional food access. While one off-reserve participant described the use of community freezers in more northerly communities as a successful example of food sharing, the group agreed that it would not be successful locally due to the Indigenous community being "too spread out" and "not close enough" (OR2) to support such a system.

The lack of programs available, in comparison to those on-reserve, which support community connections and traditional food access, were also highlighted as barriers. For example, teaching opportunities for youth were highlighted: "On reserve, they have the harvest. They take their youth on moose harvests and the elders always get together for the harvest.... So, there are supports...but that's on reserve" (OR5). The decreased availability of teaching and mentoring creates a barrier for current and future generations, the relevance of which was summarized by an off-reserve participant: "it does all come back to...affecting food because it comes back to...that knowledge being lost...and trying to access it now" (OR2).

The barriers for those off-reserve was related back to the importance of traditional food: "The importance for me lies within. I wish I could have it, but it's not accessible" (OR3).

Those both off- and on-reserve voiced concern over the trend towards diminishing areas of accessible hunting land due to government-occupied land and increasing privatization of land. Private development projects in the area directly affect access to traditional foods. Development efforts cause significant changes to the natural environment, through clear cutting and resulting pollution. An on-reserve participant remarked at the destruction and lack of accountability that these projects bring to the area: "we've got these big industries that are coming in and tearing the land apart whatever it is, destroying it. And once they've got their resources, where are they? Gone" (GN6).

In addition to the destruction, or lack of stewardship, which is valued as an important role, limited accountability was perceived to exist on the part of construction companies, to which one on-reserve participant offered this solution: "Maybe what they should do, like they did in South America—in one place they deemed a river a being and it had every right in the court of law, that if you did something up here and you were hurting the river, the river had its own identity. And everyone says 'oh, well, that's kind of sorta stupid,' but yet companies have their own identity. I mean a company lives and dies, but if a river lives and dies, then yeah, things are going live and die around it" (GN8).

This quote further strengthens the already described cultural value of stewardship of the land and depicts a fundamentally different relationship with the land compared to the culture that currently governs concepts of "development."

More locally, developments in the area negatively affect the availability of traditional species. For example, moose are segregated to one location in Nova Scotia.

This is in part perceived as a result of the hydro-dams that negatively impact marshlands which are important moose habitats. This segregation to remote areas also led to increased expenditure on "fuel, accommodations, [and] lodging" (GN1, GN10) in addition to equipment, permits, and licensing. The inability to access moose specifically impacted cultural activities: "Feasts, that's a cultural thing for our people…so where do you get the food for feasts…you gotta get that meat from somewhere and try to get…traditional moose…so that's an impact on our [culture]; trying to keep the cultural feasts going…" (GN5).

Both groups noted that federal policies worked against their ability to access traditional food and detracted from environmental conservation. The structure of fishing licenses prevented access to local fish for those temporarily living in Nova Scotia, but who would otherwise have exclusive fishing rights in their home province. One off-reserve participant remarked: "I don't eat traditionally at all because I just don't have access.… I can only fish for seven days in the entire year" (OR3).

Further licensing issues, such as open-game hunting along with the restrictions on access attached to licensing schemes, through imposition of limits on catch or seasons, detracted from the spiritual element of hunting.

Ineffective conservation measures by the federal government were noted as influencing accessibility of natural resources in the area, and thus food stability and availability: as mentioned by a member, in reference to *Bill C-38*: "the bill there that Harper put through…if you had natural resources or whatever, then the company could go into all of these places.… So that was our federal government against us" (GN6).

Supports for Accessing Traditional Food

Despite significant barriers, supports that promote access to traditional food were noted and grouped into three categories: strength of cultural values, community engagement, and consultations and partnerships. These are shown as per Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory levels of the socioecological system influencing the individual, in Figure 1.

Cultural values supported access to traditional food for those living both off- and on-reserve in that the strength of values around traditional food motivated participants to try to overcome some barriers to access. The value of intergenerational knowledge sharing was noted both off- and on-reserve, with a participant on-reserve stating that it is important "to pass on [traditional] knowledge to [the] younger generation" (GN9).

Despite previous generations of identity loss (or more active identity shielding), resultant cultural knowledge gaps, and a weakening community fabric off-reserve, there is a trend towards living within communities to "bring back the culture" (GN6). Cost was identified as a barrier to access through commodification of traditional knowledge and fees associated with, for example, fishing licenses. But in our current economic system, cost is generally associated with value, and for some the cost was worth "the experience of having a nice hunt" (GN10) and the health benefits.

As with the trend to revitalize traditional knowledge, participants described a trend towards increased community-held events. The creation of community events were highlighted as creating the opportunity for connections and celebrations. A yearly Mawio'mi held in the area, was noted by participants living off-reserve as a support to promote community connections and celebrations of traditional food. Programs such as this, that assist those living off-reserve

and included food preparation and traditions workshops, provide support for some barriers identified above.

On-reserve, community garden plots and traditional food gatherings, such as moose meat feasts supported access to traditional food. It was noted by a participant that the community tries "to implement as much [of] a cultural component of foods…in our gatherings as we have them" (GN1). The barrier of land development and resulting pollution was reduced through an initiative by community members which aimed to clean and restock a near-by river, acting as a support to improve environmental conditions and facilitate species resurgence.

All of these examples show that while a sense of community might have been historically destabilized in some respects, both on and off-reserve, there are renewed efforts to revitalize and strengthen community: some directly through traditional food, some indirectly.

On-reserve, consultations of companies with the Chiefs of Nova Scotia were seen as beneficial for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people through the opportunity to raise concerns over the environmental effects of proposed developments on traditional lands and how that, in turn, will affect food resources. The importance of partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples was further emphasized in progression towards legal protection of natural resources. A local salmon conservation group that does not identify as being Indigenous was acknowledged by community members for making important steps towards a shared goal of protection of salmon through the proposal of a by-law. The importance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities working together to protect land and resources from over-development was expressed by one participant on-reserve: "these big companies are pitting us against the non-Native community and then they're taking all of our resources and just leaving the land bare. And what the Natives and the non-Natives have to get together and say [is] 'hey, look, you're not only hurting the Natives, but you're hurting us, 'cause they drink the same water as we do'" (GN8).

Both supports and challenges exist for traditional food access in Nova Scotia; however, barriers outweighed supports in both number and magnitude.

Discussion

The results presented in this article demonstrate that the relationship between the participants in this research and traditional food, in Nova Scotia, is rich and complex. Overall, traditional food holds a place of high importance for Indigenous persons living in Nova Scotia, with clear impacts on the health (broadly defined by the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework) of individuals and communities. The barriers identified in this research highlight and locate obstacles to traditional food access. Supports identified present potential leverage points for strengthening access to traditional foods, worthy of community and policy-level consideration. These are each discussed here in the context of the literature, and in relationship to health and sustainability.

Traditional Foods are Important to Health and Sustainability

The healthfulness of traditional food, across all four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework, as perceived by participants in the current study, corroborates other research findings that there are health benefits associated with traditional food over market food (Guyot et al., 2006; Lambden et al., 2007). The results of this research identify traditional food as a valuable source of sustenance and medicine, improving perceived levels of physical health. Declining access to traditional foods, and increased reliance on market foods is described as a "nutrition transition," a well-recognized phenomenon to which other studies in Canada have attributed disproportionately high rates of diabetes and ill-health in Indigenous populations (Brooks et al., 2013; Young et al., 2000). The results also reflect findings in the literature that traditional food is an important means of expressing and reinforcing cultural identity and values (Damman et al., 2008), relationship building within and between families, and spirituality. As such, it is a vehicle for meaning making.

That traditional food is important to all four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel Evaluation Framework highlights its central role in contributing to a healthy individuals and communities. Applying FSSD sustainability theory, health and meaning making are two principles necessary in a sustainable society, and structural obstacles to these undermine sustainability (Broman & Robèrt, 2017).

Locating the Barriers and Supports

The barriers and supports to traditional foods have impacts on individuals on multiple levels, from the microsystem (individual interactions in settings with family, peers, etc.) outwards toward broader systems levels, including the mesosystem (community interactions), the exosystem (programs and policies), and macrosystem (culture, values and social structures). Using this theoretical model to locate the barriers and supports described by the community highlights that they lie almost exclusively at or beyond the mesosystem level. This indicates strongly that overarching social and cultural supports, not limited to individual and household-level action, are critical to supporting access to traditional food.

As per Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, there are important interactions between levels that can be mutually reinforcing or opposing. The barriers that exist on broader level (most of them in this research) have further impacts on an individual and community level. For example, change on a policy and legal level, as recognized and suggested by participants, is needed to address even barriers at the micro- and meso-system level (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Conversely, and as discussed below, supports that exist (mainly) on a community, family, and peer level, can help to mitigate the effects of barriers that exist at a broader level.

Because of this, effectively addressing the barriers identified, starting with the supports found, will be most effective to support traditional food access in a systemic way. And in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), the need for this to be led and shaped by the voices of Nova Scotia's Indigenous community is paramount.

Lack of Community and Systemic Barriers Decrease Access for Indigenous Canadians Living Off-Reserve

For Indigenous Nova Scotians off-reserve, the lack of self-identified community created a difficulty of

maintaining cultural connections and food sharing networks. This is exacerbated by the costs associated with accessing knowledge holders and the inability to connect with communities which can off-set some of the difficulties in accessing traditional food through food sharing networks (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014). Indicative of the importance placed on the role of community, this shows how communities offer necessary supports to accessing food, from valuable teaching experiences to food sharing networks.

The generational quieting of knowledge was a significant barrier to those living off-reserve. Limited exposure to teaching during childhood greatly reduced circulating traditional knowledge, which is now difficult to find. While educational materials on traditional food and practices has found success in other related fields, for example cook books that can share and renew traditional knowledge (Bodirsky & Johnson, 2008), more systemic approaches can have farther reach. Participants linked limited availability of teachings to previous practices of assimilation which caused a connection to form between Indigenous identity and feelings of shame. Embedded (and often invisible) structures, policies and underlying cultural assumptions still perpetuate cultural disadvantage by limiting exposure of Canadian children, including Indigenous, off-reserve dwelling children, to such traditional food knowledge. This undermines the sustainability of our social systems; as identified in this research, it has compounding effects on health and meaning making.

Inadequately Shared Decision Making, Indigenous Health and Social Sustainability for All

Federal natural resource policies, and reserve boundaries geographically limits access to traditional species. Government owned land in Nova Scotia acted as a barrier not only because of the regulations prohibiting removal of natural resources, but more simply, prohibiting access to lands where traditional plants and animals could be found. Similarly, hunting and fishing permits with associated costs, can exacerbate barriers and inequities experienced by Indigenous populations.

Licensing and permits, provincial land access regulations, and species disappearance or dislocation as a result of poorly managed private and commercial development result in increased expenses relating to traditional food access (e.g., travel and accommodations). Indigenous populations within Canada are economically disadvantaged. Research has supported the provision of income and financial support for fuel and community events involving traditional food to support access (Booth & Skelton, 2011; Guyot et al., 2006; Hopping et al., 2010; Socha et al., 2012). Though participants in this study did not call for governmental support to offset the costs associated with traditional food activities (such as hunting and fishing), this provides a good example of potential "downstream" policy options. More upstream solutions would address land access and species disappearance and dislocation directly, rather than providing a temporary solution.

Results highlighted the lack of Indigenous-Non-Indigenous consultations and partnerships that value equal influence in decision making over shared resources, and support this as one step to removing structural obstacles to Indigenous influence over shaping a society that supports health and meaning making. For example, when examining why species could no longer be found in the area, a problem which created difficulties for ensuring traditional foods were a

focus of community events, participants clearly pointed to nearby developments that destroyed habitats. A lack of consultation with the community on developments in the area, and lack of accountability on the part of developers to surrounding communities, were highlighted as being fundamental barriers to understanding how developments affect the existing, local social and ecological systems (e.g., species habitat, migration, and Indigenous food access). This is relevant particularly within Canada, as the federal government has an obligation to consult with, and if needed accommodate, Indigenous populations who have rights or land claims within an area that the government wants to develop (Government of Canada, 2011). This duty to consult is, however, lacking for private sector developments. This means that most development that impacts land use, do not require consultation.

This disregard for inclusion of Indigenous knowledge undervalues the potential it has for benefiting society as a whole. This was expressed by participants in emphasizing that partnership is an essential way forward, as the effects of environmental pollution and degradation does not discriminate—our natural resources are shared.

Furthermore, assessing food insecurity in a way that captures traditional food access in a nuanced way is arguably more helpful to guide meaningful system change for Indigenous food security and more socially sustainable food systems. In the case of food insecurity, partnerships will be most appropriate to assessing and addressing the issue if Indigenous led. Sovereign decision making over how to address food insecurity is essential, and recognition that multiple pathways and forms of knowledge are equally valuable is long overdue. In line with FSSD-informed sustainability decision making, there are many potential pathways toward a more sustainable future, so long as not violating basic principles—in this case creating or perpetuating systemic obstacles to the attainment of health.

The barriers to traditional food access identified by participants undermine sustainability in complex ways. Results highlighted the important role traditional food itself can play as a vehicle to health and meaning making. Supporting connections within the off-reserve community, removing structural barriers to knowledge and land access, and strengthening the requirements for consultative processes and partnerships with Indigenous groups on decisions affecting natural resources (whether government or private sector led), are examples of solutions to traditional food access. These play a direct role in removing some of the structural obstacles to health, influence, competence, and meaning making, and as such contribute to a more sustainable system (Broman & Robèrt, 2017; Missimer et al., 2017a, 2017b). The barriers described also impact other principles of sustainability, including physical ecosystem degradation.

Supports for Traditional Food & Sustainability

While the barriers identified represent significant challenges to be overcome, the identified supports highlight what is currently working well and indicative of promising future practices.

Daily activities that express cultural values, such as food sharing, were highlighted as supporting access to traditional food, knowledge, and reinforcing identity. Though the costs associated with traditional food was a barrier, the fact that it is done, and described as being "worth the expense" demonstrates the importance attributed to the experience of hunting, and access to traditional food, as expressions of cultural values.

The sustained emphasis on capacity building by participants with regards to development of traditional food skills in youth echoes the call for strengthening of Indigenous knowledge and empowerment found elsewhere (Elliott et al., 2012) and can support awareness, rather than assimilation, which has created great barriers to not only traditional food, but culture. This study suggests that, at a community level, some obstacles to traditional food access can be overcome by supporting community knowledge and resource sharing, and financial supports to individual and community level costs associated with traditional food access; however, a focus on self-supported traditional food access minimizes the failings of the wider system and can reframe the responsibility for change as owned by communities for whom socioecological system is failing. Community efforts combined with removing structural obstacles identified above would have much greater leverage for addressing traditional food access.

As discussed above, consultation and partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices on decision making over shared resources, done in a way that honours genuinely equal partnership is one approach to address issues upstream, in a systemic way, and to identify obstacles that may otherwise be invisible to non-Indigenous decision makers. For example, consultations with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs on resource use issues are powerful examples of partnerships that support traditional food access, through the ability to raise concerns over environmental effects of developments and protect culturally relevant land. Consultation and engagement in policy development, in principle, ensure rights are respected and protected (Assembly of First Nations, 2016; Brooks et al., 2013; Damman et al., 2008) and empower Indigenous Peoples (National Indigenous Health Organization, 2004; Skinner et al., 2006; Smylie et al., 2006). In practice, these consultations and partnerships are only effective if the process has protections in place to ensure equal decision-making power.

Limitations

The research outcomes are generalizable to the Nova Scotia context, and should not be interpreted as universal values, barriers or needed supports. As stressed in the discussion, leadership from, and continued consultation and partnership with, Indigenous communities is necessary for application of the results in other jurisdictions to ensure cultural, geographic and temporal nuances are accounted for.

Conclusions and recommendations

This research suggests that access to traditional food plays an important role in supporting health and meaning making and is inextricably linked to a sustainable food system. It is therefore to our collective advantage to support it. What this research adds to the literature is that, in Nova Scotia, although communities can develop programs, such as cleaning of waterways to create hospitable environments for fish, and holding traditional feasts, when faced with land access restrictions and destructive developments in neighboring areas, community efforts are not enough

to off-set the damage caused. Further, Indigenous Peoples living off-reserve, or outside of their Indigenous territory may not have access to such community-building efforts.

Dismantling structural obstacles, in particular those in the macrosystem and exosystem, and actively leveraging existing successes show promise. For example, identifying and dismantling policies that limit the universal inclusion of Indigenous cultural food ways into social systems (school curriculum, institutional menus, etc.) could help facilitate a resurgence of knowledge-sharing within and between communities. Legislating meaningful consultation and partnership development in decision making over shared resources, ensuring equal decision-making weight, and tracking progress through inclusion of traditional food access as a metric in food security data collection, would also help protect traditional food access.

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Appendix

Glossary of Terms:

For the purpose of this research, the following terms are defined:

Indigenous Peoples are all people who inhabited what is now called North America in advance of European colonization. In this paper, at times the term Indigenous First Nations is used to describe Indigenous communities.

Mi'kma'ki is the ancestral, unceded land of the First peoples, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) and Pasimaquaty nations. Mi'kma'ki includes NS, NB, PEI, NFLD and the Gaspe area of Quebec. Mikmaq traveled throughout these areas, known traditionally as the 7 districts, which later became 8. Current day Nova Scotia, where data for this study were collected, lies within Mi'kma'ki.

Traditional food refers to local plants and animals that are acquired through gathering or harvesting methods that contain cultural meaning; traditional foods vary depending on culture, local availability and geography (Earle, 2011). In this research, participants described traditional foods as "what our ancestors used to eat." Examples from participants included: wild caught fish and seafood, deer, partridge, moose, wolves, coyote, eels, bear, rabbit, beaver, muskrat, geese, porcupine, whale, maple syrup, herbs and berries. Some also referred to "what I ate, when I was a child" and this included foods like molasses, flour, tea (both herbal and imported "black" tea), coffee, apples. Traditional foods were discussed interchangeably as a source of nourishment (nutrition/sustenance) and medicine (health promotion/healing).

An **Indigenous food system** "consist[s] of a multitude of natural communities…includ[ing] all of the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plant, animal and fungi species that have sustained Indigenous Peoples over thousands of years. All parts of Indigenous food systems are inseparable and ideally function in healthy interdependent relationships…" (Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty, n.d.).

Household food insecurity refers to limited or inadequate access to safe, nutritious foods in order to support healthy and productive lives within a household due to financial constraints (Tarasuk, 2002).

Cultural food security refers to hunting and harvesting practices, sharing and consumption patterns associated with traditional food, which act as vehicles for cultural teachings (Power, 2008).

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Original Research Article

A livelihood to feel good about: Enacting values around animals, land, and food outside of the agricultural core

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Abstract

This paper presents and reflects on findings from ethnographic research conducted with smaller-scale farmers in the Parry Sound district, Ontario, Canada. The research highlights understandings of what it means to be a "good farmer" and explores how farmers enact their personal values and morals in efforts to produce "good food" for their communities. Central issues that emerge include notions of how to ethically care for animals and the land, as well as how to navigate tensions that can emerge while engaged in agricultural livelihoods. In their agriculturally peripheral location, participants point to how they imagine and embody possibilities about "good farming" and "good food" that challenge in various ways the larger-scale agricultural approaches that dominate agricultural core areas in southern Ontario.

Keywords: Smaller-scale agriculture; Ontario; local food

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Résumé

Cet article présente, tout en y réfléchissant, les observations d'une recherche ethnographique menée auprès de petits producteurs agricoles dans le district de Parry Sound, en Ontario, au Canada. La recherche fait ressortir diverses interprétations de ce que signifie être « un bon fermier ». Elle explore la manière dont les agriculteurs appliquent leurs valeurs personnelles et morales dans leurs efforts pour produire de la « bonne nourriture » pour leurs communautés. Les principaux enjeux qui en émergent touchent la notion d'éthique dans les soins aux animaux et à la terre aussi bien que la manière de composer avec les tensions qui surviennent parfois dans les activités agricoles. Situés en périphérie des régions agricoles, les participants révèlent les possibilités qu'ils imaginent et souhaitent concrétiser en matière de « bonne agriculture » et de « bonne nourriture », possibilités qui défient de diverses façons les approches à grande échelle dominant les principales zones agricoles du sud de l'Ontario.

Introduction

There is ongoing recognition of the importance of considering how local agricultural discourses and practices may play out within broader food system contexts, both in Canada and elsewhere (e.g., Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020; Bronson et al., 2019; Laforge et al., 2017; Lavallee-Picard 2016; Loring, 2021; MacLeod, 2016; O'Neill, 2008; Price et al., 2022). Understanding the diversity of possibilities and opportunities means engaging with a range of voices in the food system (Blay-Palmer et al., 2020), and this includes in-depth reflections on agricultural priorities and practices among farmers located outside of the agricultural core. In this article, I draw on ethnographic, qualitative data from my work with smaller-scale food producers in the Parry Sound district, Ontario, Canada. These participants are located outside of the core of Ontario agriculture, both geographically and conceptually. Geographically, core spaces are those where agricultural infrastructure and supports are relatively plentiful and straightforward to access; conceptually, core spaces are those in which smaller-scale, non-intensive agricultural practices may be overlooked or downplayed within broader agricultural policies and priorities. Despite being located outside of the core, there is a range of agricultural activities in the district that contribute to local food options and to feeding people more broadly. Elsewhere (Finnis, 2021) I have considered some of the practical and policy challenges that emerge for food producers in this district. In this companion piece, I demonstrate the ways in which some producers highlight the opportunities and flexibility that can emerge in peripheral locales, with a specific focus on how notions of what it means to be a "good farmer," particularly with regards to livestock and land engagements, intersect with the pursuit of producing "good food."

Research exploring what it means to be a "good farmer" has drawn attention to farmer identities throughout the lifecourse (Riley, 2014), gendered differences in agricultural values (Burns 2021), and the specific perspectives of organic farmers (Stock, 2007; Tovey, 1997). Much of the literature focusses on areas of

overlap and distinctions that emerge between conventional and organic or environmentally-oriented agriculture (Burton, 2004; Hunt, 2010; McGuire et al., 2013; Saunders, 2016; Setten, 2004; Silvasti, 2003; Stotten, 2016; Sutherland, 2013; Sutherland & Darnhofer, 2012), including considerations of how established norms of "good farming" can change with time and the influx of different approaches to farming (e.g., Burton et al., 2021; Sutherland and Darnhoffer, 2012). As Burton et al. (2021) remind us, there is no single definition of a good farmer.

Similarly, there is a range of research that interrogates what "good" and/or local food means in terms of farming and alternative food networks (e.g., Feagan et al., 2004; Hinrichs, 2003; Kallio, 2020; MacLeod, 2016; O'Neill, 2008; Torjusen et al., 2008). This includes considerations of shorter supply chains, direct marketing, and producer-consumer engagement (Feagan & Morris, 2009; Furman et al., 2014; Lombardi et al., 2015; McKitterick et al., 2016; Mert-Cakal & Miele, 2020; Sage, 2003). As Beingessner and Fletcher (2020) note in their research with farmers in Saskatchewan, Canada, there is an increasing place for local food systems within the broader, intensive, agricultural context. Yet, notions of what "good food" means can be contested and unreflexively bundled with ideas of "local food" (Connell et al., 2008), or "authenticity" (Smithers & Joseph, 2010).

Why does understanding the specific time-and-place nature of these connections matter? As McGuire et al. (2013) point out, there is still more to understand about how farmers perceive and enact their identities in terms of agricultural actions in diverse contexts (see also Bronson et al., 2019); this includes locations outside of food system "hot spots" where there are expectations of intensive land and animal management (Murdoch, 2000). These considerations are also important as agricultural contexts shift, including in terms of expansions into new or marginal locales as climates change (Price et al., 2022). Taking seriously the voices of farmers in terms of how they define notions of "goodness" in practice allows for understandings of how—and why—they might push back against conventional agriculture in such contexts. DeLind (2011) argues that considerations of local food require "engaging in the continual creation, negotiation, and re-creation of identity, memory, and meaning" (p. 279). Although DeLind (2011) is discussing consumers, her point is also relevant with regard to producers (see MacLeod, 2016, for example), and exploring agricultural practices and priorities in specific locales allows us to consider how farmers' identities and practices can both reflect and shape agricultural potentials and possibilities. Considering the specificities of ideas of "good food" within diverse spaces and policy/practice contexts remains both critical (Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020; see also O'Neill, 2008) and timely.

As I show in this paper, notions of "good food" and "good farming" intersect with land, livestock, and the possibilities provided by a peripheral agricultural space that specifically lacks the markers of intensive agriculture. To explore these connections, I first provide an overview of the research area, along with research methods and demographic information. This is followed by a discussion of how participants connect the idea of "good farming" to values and priorities around the treatment of land and livestock. This leads to a consideration of how, for at least some of the producers I have worked with, locally embedded good farming practices intersect with constructions of what it means to produce "good food."

The Parry Sound district is the most southerly district within the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation's remit. Approximately 43,000 people live in smaller communities scattered across just over 9,000

square kilometers.[1] The district has a history of agriculture dating to the late 1800s. However, when it comes to contemporary economic development, discussions typically fall into categories of tourism and recreation (Michels, 2017). These priorities are supported by a landscape of woodlands, lakes, and nearby provincial parks, along with existing cottage, resort, and camping options.

This is not a location of unbroken tracts of uniform agricultural fields that characterise areas of intensive agriculture (Burton, 2004). Instead, the landscape is variable and diverse, including areas with rockier, thinner soils, rolling hills, wetlands, and thick woodlands, along with some areas that have a more "standardized" appearance of flat agricultural lands. The weather is colder, and growing seasons are shorter than in southern Ontario.[2] The closest livestock auction house is at least a one-and-a-half-hour drive to the south, but, depending on location within the district, and the nature of the roads travelled, transportation can take longer. Farm supply options and large animal veterinarians are limited.[3] However, the relative affordability of agricultural land remains in marked contrast to other parts of Ontario (Rotz et al., 2019), in part because farmland does not face the same urban sprawl development pressures found in parts of southern Ontario (Francis et al., 2012).[4] This has made the area attractive to young or newer farmers and contributes to the development of new food production operations.

Methods and demographic information

I draw on research conducted through semi-structured interviews and participant observation at district farmers' markets and food-related activities such as food symposia or farm stand tours. Given that the project concentrated on local food systems, recruitment focussed on operations that produced at least some foods for human consumption. Operations that represented exclusively feed or tree farms, for example,

[1] A small number of participants lived in the neighbouring Nipissing district. However, they farmed in the same contexts as the Parry Sound district, and in some cases also owned or rented farmland in the Parry Sound district. The two districts belong to the same Ontario Federation of Agriculture (East Nipissing-Parry Sound) region. From an agricultural perspective, the lines between Nipissing and Parry Sound districts are blurred.

[2] Some participants highlighted warmer weather and extending growing seasons related to climate change. While some anticipated that local warming will allow a wider variety of crops to be grown, others were concerned that unfavourable weather will become more common. This anxiety particularly emerged during a dry summer and large forest fires that affected parts of the district in 2018.

[3] Abattoir access fluctuated over the research period. In 2017, there were two abattoirs located in the district (one for small livestock and one for larger). By 2020, both had closed. In February 2022, an announcement was made about a proposed abattoir expansion in nearby North Bay, Ontario, with the stated goal of sourcing meat from northeastern Ontario and Quebec (Kelly, 2022).

[4] This was the situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. As occurred elsewhere in the country, property (land and housing) prices in the area increased during the pandemic. Whether prices decrease over time remains to be seen.

were not included. Although in this section I provide a brief overview of all participating households to situate my argument, for the purposes of this paper I primarily draw on twenty households who discussed "good farming" and producing local, "good food" in the context of their district. These households included maple syrup producers along with vegetable, small and large livestock, and mixed-use (vegetables and livestock) operations. This group of participants fell into all age ranges and represented both more established (75%) and newer (25%) farmers.

Participants were recruited through a combination of approaches, including emails or phone calls, discussions at farmers' markets or food events, personal contacts, and snowball sampling. I gave local talks at various points during the project, discussing preliminary results and next steps, which led to some additional participant recruitment. Although recruitment also required that people produced at least some of their food for sale, I did not set a minimum income amount for participation. I wanted to ensure that I was able to connect with people who were in early, experimental, or development phases of food production operations, and this ultimately accounted for approximately 12% of participants.

In total, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fifty-one households. Most interviews were conducted between early 2017 and late 2018, took place on-farm, and were sometimes accompanied by short farm tours or other activities. Interviews were transcribed and then coded through NVivo, using a range of codes. Some of the codes relevant to this paper include 'Good Food', 'Caring for the Land', 'Staying Local, Feeding Ontario', 'Big vs Small Farms (and recognition)', and 'Potentials'.

Participants were 48% women and 52% men, and 67% were between the ages of fifty and eighty when interviewed.[5] Some participants were relatively new farmers, while others were more established. Some were working land that had been in their families for generations, and others had purchased agricultural land more recently. For the most part, operations relied on family labour, although some hired local help during peak activity times. The amount of land actively worked depended on the nature of the operation. For example, those who raised larger livestock might own and/or rent hundreds of acres to support pasture and hay needs, while vegetable farmers might work two acres or less.

Approximately 71% of participants were involved in large or small livestock production, typically as part of a mixed livestock or livestock-vegetable approach. Livestock represented included cattle, poultry, sheep, honeybees, pigs, and goats. A diversity of vegetables, and some berries, were also produced; some households also offered seedlings or value-added products such as dried herbs, dried vegetable soup bases, or pickles. In addition, some participants produced maple syrup and/or maple syrup products, primarily as the sole product, but sometimes as a secondary product. None of the farms were certified organic, but many participants indicated they intentionally used minimal or no purchased inputs and were functionally organic.

Participants primarily sold to local consumers through farmers' markets, farm stand/farm gate sales, community-supported agriculture, and pre-orders of livestock. Some sold to wider markets, for example through websites with national shipping, livestock auction houses, through a wide variety of stores, or, in the case of dairy farms, through provincial processes.

[5] To put this into context, the 2021 census found that, in the Parry Sound district, the average age of the population was 49.4 years, and the median age was 55.2 years, with 30.2 % of the population over the age of sixty-five (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Most participants used a mix of marketing strategies, reflecting the range of agricultural activities they were engaged in.

Only one household indicated 100% income from their land, and this included non-agriculture income-generating activities. Several households were working towards the goal of 100% agricultural income, but this was a long-term and slow process. The reality is that non-agricultural income sources were critical, and, in some cases, participants stated that they worked other jobs *in order* to be able to farm.

Results and discussion

Farming well in the Parry Sound district: What should a "good farmer" be doing?

Processes of reflexively assessing personal agricultural priorities and finding ways to enact those priorities (Sutherland & Darnhofer, 2012, p. 236; see also MacLeod, 2016; Stock, 2007) entail aligning core values and practices. For the farmers I worked with, key core values included recognizing and working within the complexities and specificities of agricultural spaces and organisms; understanding livestock and reflecting on their quality of life; and, ideally, providing spaces for non-agricultural species. In this section, I explore how farmers articulate these values and the ways that they can intersect.

One cold afternoon in January 2017, I arrived at a farm to interview a husband and wife in their sixties who operated a mixed-use livestock and vegetable farm. They had been living and farming in the area for well over a decade. As we drank tea, I asked about key challenges that they experienced in a peripheral agricultural locale. Rather than focussing solely on infrastructure or other resources, their responses also prioritised talking about learning to become "good farmers": "figuring out how to do things right first, and then how to do it easier," the husband said, almost immediately segueing into a discussion of their unfolding understanding of what it was they were doing when they were farming. As newer farmers, they were constantly looking for better ways "to do things right."

> Husband: When we first started farming, we thought we were raising animals. Then we thought we were raising forages to feed the animals, but then we realized it was soil biology. And plowing and pesticides and chemicals destroy soil biology…There is a food web beneath the soil. And plants are interacting with soil biology, which feeds the roots… You have to try things and figure out the consequences.

Their understanding of becoming "good farmers" had come in layers, as they learned about the needs of livestock, and then the land, and then the soil, through workshops, reading, and practical experience; an emphasis on longer-term land management (Furman et al., 2014) also emerged. Doing things "right" also involved thinking about how their animals lived. Specific ideas of quality of life intersected with know-how and skills.

> Husband: With regards to animal husbandry, it has to be humane…and you have to be able to help them when they're in distress. For example, I knew a guy with one cow—and that's a mistake itself, it's a herd animal—and the cow went into labour. It got hip lock, and he had no idea how to deal with it. So, he

> just shot the cow.[6] It can't be a humane operation if you don't know how to take care of the animals.
>
> Wife: It's important to us that our animals live the way they were meant to. They are grazing animals, and they should be grazing. I think confinement raising can be done humanely, but it's not what we want to do.

Confinement raising was also constructed by this household as problematic in terms of environmental stewardship. Keeping animals to pasture meant managing numbers, along with ongoing reflections on and modifications of agricultural practices, that allowed for "[raising] animals in a way that doesn't do harm for the environment…You have to be conscious of how you do things that minimize the downsides to what you're doing" (husband).

The condition of livestock is important in a range of agricultural contexts (e.g., Burns, 2021; Sutherland, 2013; Sutherland & Darnhofer, 2012), and questions of wellbeing may be linked to the ways farmers situate the size and ethos of their operations (Bronson et al., 2019). For many of the farmers I worked with, livestock wellbeing was specifically linked with ideas of quality of life and respect for animals that they placed within the realm of possibilities for smaller-scale operations. Some, for example, shared stories about individual animals, their favourite animals, and those with individual quirks or needs. They discussed the "pure joy of seeing a calf being born" (mixed livestock farmer, woman, fifties) and the importance of appreciating animals as having their own behaviours and engagements with each other, the land, and humans. A poultry farmer in her sixties discussed making clothes for hens that needed a little extra care. A cattle farmer in his sixties talked about a favourite cow, one that saved him from a cranky bull, and about his appreciation of the curiosity of new calves as they surrounded him in his fields. He also emphasized the importance of detailed understandings of livestock needs, and of knowing how to care for animals and make hard decisions to minimize suffering, saying,

> If it's sick, fix it or put it down. A neighbour had a sick cow, and she stood for two weeks then fell down. I was appalled he didn't put her down. "It was hard on me," he said, but why let them suffer? Take control of the situation and end it if that's what it needs. It's your responsibility to look after them and if you don't do it, it's not taking responsibility.

Stock (2007) has argued that "land or soil then acts as an intermediary through which farmers direct moral action towards individuals" (p. 96). For the farmers I worked with, livestock also served as a moral intermediary, and, in some cases, there was a specific connection made between land and livestock wellbeing. This perspective was clearly articulated by farmers who saw poor management skills, and/or a lack of reflexive assessment of established practices, as a reflection of overall questionable agricultural values, particularly in terms of a contrast between exploiting the land and taking care of it (Silvasti 2003, p. 147). As noted previously, some areas of the district are very rocky with thin soils that require particular attention to ensure pasture health. Farmers in those areas were especially critical of others in the district who were not "taking responsibility," and who they described as "miners" of the land who would "crop, crop, crop and then they walk away when there's nothing left," rather than thinking about the ways that delicate soils could be supported and enriched over time, leaving the soil "in better condition" (cattle farmer, woman, seventies) for the future of local food production. One cattle farmer

[6] Although there are some large animal veterinarians in the district, accessing them in an emergency can be difficult or impossible. This means that knowing how to help your animals becomes critical.

linked short-term mentalities with laziness (Burton, 2004) and disrespect for land and animals, using this to question who truly deserved to be called a farmer. Demonstrating a link between respectful land practices and healthy animals, he said,

> They should use other methods so they don't lose the soil...[but some] are cutting further and they don't care about the land. They make everything they can from it and then walk away to the next farm...and there's nothing that bugs me more than seeing hay sitting and rotting and people think they can feed their cattle with that, and they'll be healthy after the winter...If your animal's not good, you've done it... They don't deserve the title of farmer. (cattle farmer, sixties)

Such contrasts were often part of farmers' efforts to situate themselves more broadly as outside of intensive, large-scale farming practices. Some participants were very blunt about this difference. For example, a mixed livestock farmer in her fifties said, "we don't spray up here like down south," and her husband (fifties) followed up with, "the OMAFRA [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs] point of view is that it's easier to back one big farm than smaller ones. It's not the way to go, but they will do it that way." A cattle farmer in his sixties reinforced this idea that government priorities do not reflect healthy approaches, saying, "they want everything in one area. Five thousand heads of cattle is more cost effective. But then it impacts the area, and the animals are less healthy, they're in close quarters, there's more doctoring." In contrast, he talked about how his small operation meant he could pay more attention to the individual needs of his animals.

A mixed livestock farmer in his forties who had previously lived and worked in southern Ontario discussed his re-evaluation of conventional agricultural practices once he moved to the district and argued that this increased his ability to respond to the unexpected. He said,

> I want to take care of the environment. I ran a sprayer for two years [in southern Ontario], and do I believe it's great? Not totally...I see the need for GMOs to help prevent diseases but pounding all the herbicides and fungicides is a problem. Go for a wholistic approach, above and under the soil. Like rotational grazing. It works. It's better, it takes more time, but it can mean more animals on the ground, and taking care of the ground...I used it to help weather the drought this year [2018].

It is important to note here that some project participants did discuss expansion and/or intensification aspirations and the possibilities for this in the future, particularly if climate and infrastructure contexts changed. The reality is that any space, agriculturally core or not, might potentially be used for intensive or non-intensive approaches to food production. I do not want to suggest that all participants were inherently committed to the idea of maintaining smaller-scale operations. In some cases, this idea was not entirely compatible with goals of making 100% of household income from farming. That said, although some argued that local farm expansion would be possible with adequate infrastructure and space, this was often framed in terms of relatively small expansions—for example, adding an additional fifty head of cattle if more pasturelands could be acquired or rehabilitated. This was tempered with the recognition of economies of scale. As one younger cattle farmer put it, there is a "small, happy medium between factory farming and homesteading...you need numbers to make the money as a farmer. One cow is worth one cow, and it's hard to increase numbers but not be factory farming."

It is also important to acknowledge that, for some participants, the commitment to smaller-scale

operations was in part a strategic economic decision that responded to changing markets—it was not just about personal values, but also about responding to consumer desires and being prepared to be transparent in sharing agricultural practices. As one livestock farmer in his sixties said, this is about "an animal being raised in a happy, comfortable environment and as normal as can be. I think that's what society wants. Twenty-five-year-old kids think differently than we did. They think about the environment and surroundings.... So, they ask how the animals are raised." A mixed livestock farmer in her seventies specifically situated their operation in terms of customer engagement, saying, "most of the food raised in Canada is safe. But I know my own produce and the beef and egg customers, they know how my beef was raised and any antibiotics that had to be used on them...That's their preference."

Producing "good food"

How do these values around livestock and land play out in terms of the associated meanings of "good food?" As noted above, there is a range of research exploring "good/local" food in terms of agricultural production. For example, Sage's (2003) discussion of the construction of "good food" among artisanal food producers and farmers in southwest Ireland demonstrates how locality and ecology can become emphasized (see also McKitterick et al., 2016). Food becomes "good" because it is embedded in "locality of origin, naturalness of its raw materials, and its methods of production" (Sage 2003, p. 50), with smaller scales of production and shorter supply chains. Yet these are not unproblematic perspectives, and local food and short supply chain movements have the potential for mixed effects (Mundler & Laughrea, 2016); may problematically assume social or environmental benefits and sustainability (Baritaux et al., 2016; Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020; Morris & Kirwan, 2011); and may ultimately emphasise individual actions over critiques of broader food system injustices (DeLind, 2011; Desmarais & Whittman, 2014).

Understanding the specificities of ideas of "good food" within diverse spaces is therefore critical. Among many of my participants, issues of locality emerged, where perceptions of "good food" were tied to specific spaces that allow for specific tastes. This was not particularly about what those spaces contain, i.e., this is not a discussion of terroir. Rather, this was structured around what those spaces *do not* contain: the by-products and stresses of intensive agriculture, the pressures to undertake intensive agricultural practices, and the possibility of having to compromise personal values in the name of production. This explicit contrast between intensive and non-intensive agriculture again encompassed values around livestock treatment that reduced stress, as well as engagements with livestock and land that focussed on quality rather than quantity. While the intensive versus non-intensive farming difference emerges here, it is framed in terms of being located outside of core agricultural spaces. Physical peripherality is situated as central to engaging in agriculture that reflects non-intensive philosophies. Therefore, this is not simply a discussion of less intensive agriculture, but also a discussion of place as shaping options and practice.

For example, mixed livestock farmers in their fifties drew contrasts between intensive agriculture and their own practices, connecting ideas of healthy land, healthy animals, and a better-quality product:

> Husband: I think what separates our meat from the guy with 30,000 pigs is stress. Our cattle's diet is 80-90% grass. Our pigs and chickens eat the same as the big places...But what makes the difference is twenty pigs in a barn versus the 1,500 pigs where I picked them [as weanlings]. I think that animals transfer their

> stress...If you have a smaller place, there's less stress for the animals.
>
> Wife: A better life, definitely. Physically, mentally, and the food they eat. When we go out to the pasture, we're looking at the quality of the pasture, the health of it because it's going to make a difference on the animals. It's all working together. If we're not maintaining their diets by watching over the land, then we're not going to have a great product.

Vegetable producers tended to mobilize notions of growing "as natural as possible" (vegetable farmer, woman, thirties), and the idea that, "food can taste good, but if it's full of chemicals, it's not good" (vegetable farmer, man, thirties), which for some was specifically related to their physical location. Members of one household (in their fifties) stressed the importance of fresh, organically grown, nutrient-dense foods, and their low-till, heirloom species approach to growing vegetables. While they were somewhat envious of the richer, flatter, and easier to maintain agricultural lands in southern Ontario, they also pointed to their ability to better control their agricultural practices precisely because they were not compromised by the decisions that others made in the face of intensification pressures (Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020). As one household member put it, "where we grow is quiet, isolated, and there are no neighbours with GMOs or pesticides." Contamination of their organic operation therefore became a moot point because they had the physical space to farm without concerns about the practices of others. Similarly, one household of beekeepers noted that being physically distanced from areas that grew monocrops of corn, soy, or canola allowed them to be less concerned about pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids, affecting the health of their hives. The combination of geographical distance and non-intensive agriculture was important to them given inadequate government regulation of these agrochemicals (Ellis, 2019). Peripherality also emerged when some maple syrup producers spoke about why maple syrup from the region tended to win flavour and quality awards at competitions, and why it was in high demand; as one maple syrup producer put it, "maybe it's because there isn't much external in the soil around here."

In some cases, producing good food—and/or offering critical perspectives on contemporary food systems—became a moral way to interact with others and support rural communities, to connect with others through food, and to support visions of change (Cox et al., 2008). Similar perspectives have been found elsewhere when it comes to mobilizing alternative approaches to food production and distribution (e.g., Bronson et al., 2019; Hinrichs, 2008; Torjusen et al., 2008), although producer participation in local food movements may also be motivated by economic (Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020; Ferguson et al., 2017; Le Velly & Dufeu, 2016) and other goals.

For some participants, this community connection was framed in terms of displaying care and engagement with others. For example, a mixed livestock farmer in her forties said, "I like the part of doing something for someone. We're not so much contributing to the Ontario meat market, but we're contributing to our community," while a vegetable farmer in her twenties prioritized building relationships through food, saying, "I can grow things and keep things local and keep people closer and build community by growing here...and you're feeding people. I always liked the feeling of helping people and everyone likes food, and they like good food."

In other cases, the community connection took on activist elements, offering alternative approaches to food production and more direct ways of sharing resources, and pointing to the centrality of local food production in maintaining and building community

(Bronson et al., 2019). Local food was about "creating a movement that keeps moving forward" (mixed livestock farmer, woman, fifties), where money spent at local farms meant money staying in local communities, helping to support the viability and food security of those communities in the longer-term. One vegetable farmer in his sixties went further, linking notions of "good food" with critical analyses of food systems and encouraging community capacity building. His operation was part of his larger mission to get people to think critically about what they eat and where it comes from and to re-embed food production at local, including household, levels. Although he did not specifically use the term food sovereignty, his philosophy encompassed goals of shifting to an alternative agricultural system (Beingessner & Fletcher, 2020, p. 138). He said:

> I want to see people take a step back from what they're doing and how they're doing it, and not accept things as they are. We can't keep buying tomatoes from Mexico…It's important to make other people aware of what's here and there and save the diversity…and you can talk people into buying seeds and trying to grow something—even one thing—at home…Don't tell them, show them.

Recognizing and navigating tensions

A reflexive approach to understanding smaller-scale farming activities recognizes the "messy, overlapping, imperfect and contradictory experience within local farming communities" (Ferguson et al., 2017, p. 15). Part of this is acknowledging and engaging with potential and actual tensions that emerge when it comes to values and practices. This means recognizing that not all participants in this project held the same perspectives and priorities. As discussed briefly above, tensions between economics and values could emerge when thinking about possible expansion. Some participants discussed concepts of sustainability primarily or exclusively in economic terms, or "being able to make a living" (mixed livestock farmer, man, forties), which included a focus on improved marketing options and the ways they would need to reshape the landscape to facilitate expansion. While some favoured trying to balance "the ability of the farmer to make a living, but not destroy the environment" (cattle farmer, man, sixties), others wanted significant agricultural expansion that would potentially increase environmental pressures, but that they argued was nevertheless necessary for realistic agricultural livelihoods and to feed more people.

Even those participants who were more focused on the "good farmer-good food" values and practices discussed above experienced a range of issues that were conceptually "messy." Here I focus on two of them: a) the tensions created by market realities, and b) the ways that spaces for non-agricultural species were discussed and experienced. Both sets of tensions demonstrate how external factors can shape agricultural practices, regardless of individual priorities or preferences.

While livestock farmers may work to minimize stress and maximize a high quality of life, most of their animals are ultimately destined for market. This was sometimes difficult for participants to reconcile, and some spoke with considerable emotion about selling animals. As one cattle farmer in his sixties put it, "someday you have to do what you're raising them for. But it's hard sometimes." This was both about letting go of animals and about recognizing that the conditions under which animals were slaughtered may not reflect farmers' preferences and ideas around best practice. Although the abattoirs that participants used were smaller-scale, transportation distance was often a concern in terms of animal welfare and the quality of the meat. The cattle farmer quoted above discussed the importance of using a local abattoir (now closed, but

still operating at the time), calling it "the handiest", while other options were "a lot further to take them, and I like to have as small an impact on them as possible. They're my babies until they have to go...and they might as well have as good a life as possible while they're here." Part of that good life included minimizing transportation stresses.

Members of a mixed livestock and vegetable producing household argued for a restructuring of processing rules and were frustrated that butchering could not be done on-farm, where they felt it would be more humane and less stressful for their livestock.[7] They took an approach to mitigating some aspects of this stress, something that was possible with their smaller numbers of animals, saying,

> Transporting is not good for them, but the government forces this so we only put two [animals] at a time in the trailer, we put them in the day before with hay, in a nice big trailer...[normally] they're jammed into trucks so that they don't fall over if they slam down on the brakes, and they can sit in there for hours without food or water. I think that what we accept as good food practice is barbaric. It almost makes me cry to think about how animals are treated. We transport ours later in the day, when the cow is dozy, and it's cooler. (woman, sixties)

Reconciling these tensions was not easy, and, pragmatically, farmers recognized their animals were both living beings that deserved respect and care and income generators that must be sold and slaughtered to ensure continued agricultural activities. Policy changes that would allow for on-farm slaughter, perhaps through small-scale mobile operations, could potentially address aspects of this tension, but were also things that people knew they had no control over.

Another tension reflects the reality that agriculture is fundamentally predicated on landscape transformation (e.g., Silvasti, 2003). Given that concerns about the quality of their land were largely about *agricultural* spaces and their implications for *agricultural* species, there was some ambivalence among participants about non-agricultural organisms. Keeping "bush cut down" (cattle farmer, woman, seventies) was sometimes positioned as a moral obligation that honoured the work of previous generations and that ensured land did not return to "wasted" spaces of bush and bogs. The containment of nature also emerged when discussing species that were potentially inconvenient or harmful. For example, beavers, plentiful in the area, could become problematic in that their activities could undermine field drainage and water management. Discussion of beavers within a mixed livestock and vegetable household demonstrated the different perspectives that can be held within one household when it comes to reconciling the place of wildlife within the agricultural landscape (Burns, 2021):

> Husband (sixties): [The beavers are] a plague.
>
> Wife (sixties): But there should be a place for beavers.
>
> Husband: They flood fields and take six inches of topsoil and put it into the river, silting it up. Farmers can take out beaver dams, but not through excavation.
>
> Wife: [He] and I don't entirely agree about the beavers.

[7] The abattoir issue was part of broader frustration with policies that do not benefit smaller-scale farmers. Some farmers pointed out that food safety regulations were disadvantageous for small abattoirs, disincentivizing operations. When operations closed, it put additional pressures on the remaining nearby small abattoirs, slowing down marketing, increasing farm operation costs, and frustrating farmers and consumers. Similar issues have been found by Laforge et al. (2017), who highlight implications of this for a functioning local food system. For many of the farmers I worked with, butchering rules, policies, and access did not reflect their ethics around animal wellbeing, did not benefit their operational economics, and potentially lowered the quality of their product.

> Husband: I don't have a problem with getting rid of beavers because there are too many of them. But we don't even allow hunting on the farm.

Discussions around other species also highlighted tensions that can emerge in both preserving spaces for, but also finding ways of containing, non-agricultural species that have the potential to affect agricultural work. One tricky species is milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). Important for wild pollinators and essential for the monarch butterfly lifecycle, milkweed is also problematic for pasture/hay quality and is difficult to eradicate once it has taken root. While some did not allow milkweed on their lands or in adjacent spaces, others addressed the problem through dual lenses of containment and balance. A mixed livestock farmer in his fifties, for example, said, "we have left milkweed, but it's expanding. We have three patches. We report the [monarch] caterpillar numbers, and we fence the [animals] out. This year will be Round Up to constrain the milkweed, to contain it. To try and balance it."

In some cases, participants argued that they had a responsibility to maintain space for nature, for example grassland birds. A mixed livestock and vegetable farmer in his sixties considered ensuring pasture nesting habitats for birds as one of the "things you should try to do," to "ecologically support things," even though this required that they adjust haying times and pasture maintenance. This perspective was echoed by the mixed livestock farmer in his fifties who, above, discussed his milkweed patches. Referring specifically to the Endangered Species Act, he said, "we have a management program for grassland birds, and we try to avoid prime habitats, and not cut for hay until they're done nesting." Others pointed out that maintaining active agriculture in the district ensured habitats for species at risk. Members of one multi-generational household that raised mixed livestock, for example, cited their commitment to maintaining barns that allowed for thirty barn swallow nests on their property.[8]

At the same time, the space available for non-agricultural species could be contingent on a lack of significant conflict. While species like beavers and milkweed might be acceptable in contained numbers, and compromises could sometimes be made about the timing of some agricultural activities to benefit nesting grassland birds, predators represented a different situation. Livestock farmers raised the problem of coyotes and wolves moving across or permanently into their agricultural spaces. The danger this represented, especially to younger livestock, required shooting predator species. At the same time, some participants cited poor wildlife management policies as creating situations where coyotes and wolves starved, putting them into direct conflict with farmers. A mixed livestock farmer in his seventies critiqued rules that protected wolves but not white-tailed deer, saying, "it doesn't make sense to protect the predators and let the prey go," because when deer populations fell due to a combination of disease, lack of winter food, and tourism-hunting, the predator populations turned to livestock. These externally imposed rules ultimately reinforced conflict, and while shooting predators was constructed as justified for herd safety and care, it was also not something that farmers necessarily felt good about. Moreover, some suggested that predator conflicts reflected poor farm management practices, where a lack of knowledge and best practices affected other farmers (and livestock) more broadly. One mixed livestock farmer in her sixties put it this way: "when people have problems with wolves, it's most times their fault. They do the wrong things."

[8] According to the Government of Ontario (2019), barn swallow numbers have declined by 66% since 1972, linked to the loss of barns for nesting and decreases in their insect food sources.

Why does it matter? Thinking about local agricultural possibilities

Why is it important to undertake ethnographic considerations of the experiences of farmers outside of core agricultural locales? As I have shown, farmers' perceptions of livestock quality of life, healthy lands, and raising "good food" for local communities can both shape and reflect the possibilities and spaces of this district. For some, farming in the area offers the possibility of explicitly pushing back against food production processes that they see as unsustainable and unhealthy. For others, preservation of land and giving their livestock good lives were more central, but nevertheless resulted in practices that they contrasted to those of intensive farming. The land, though less rich compared to southern Ontario, was also conceptualized as lacking in years of artificial inputs and intensification pressures; livestock, while still ultimately destined for abattoirs, nevertheless had the "chance to live" (mixed livestock farmer, woman, thirties) as part of an ethos of caring and engagement. Thus, for many of my participants, their location outside of core Ontario agricultural spaces allowed them flexibility, along with the potential to align their farming practices with the qualities they attributed to "good food."

This was also specifically constructed by many as personally rewarding in ways that were not necessarily monetary but were nevertheless valuable. I conclude this paper with a quote that encapsulates the importance of being able to farm in ways that provide a personally meaningful livelihood, and that is also a rich reminder of the diverse factors that can intersect in shaping agricultural operations and notions of "good food":

> We're not bottom-line people. We want to stay reasonable. We want to invest our money, time, experience, to create something respectful. We're passionate, it's not always about the money. It's about passion, quality…it's creating a livelihood you feel good about. Making life better for everyone and everything, including the bees. (beekeeper, woman, sixties)

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Original Research Article

Characterizing the development and dissemination of dietary messaging in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Northwest Territories

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Abstract

Public health communication about diet in Inuit communities must balance the benefits and risks associated with both country and store-bought food choices and processes to support Inuit well-being. An understanding of how dietary messages—public health communication addressing the health and safety of country and store-bought food—are developed and disseminated in the Arctic is currently lacking.

As part of the Country Foods for Good Health study, this participatory research sought to characterize dietary messaging in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), Northwest Territories (NWT), from the perspective of territorial, regional and local dietary message disseminators to further improve message communication in the region.

We conducted an in-person interview (n=1) (February 2020), telephone interviews (n=13) (May-June 2020), and follow-up telephone interviews (n=5) (June 2021) with key informants about their involvement in developing and/or disseminating dietary messages about the health benefits and risks of country foods and/or store-bought foods in/for the ISR. Key informants interviewed included health professionals (n=5), government employees (n=6) and community nutrition or food program coordinators (n=3) located in Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk and Yellowknife, NWT. We conducted a thematic analysis on the 19 interviews.

Our findings indicate that publicly disseminated dietary messages in the ISR are developed at all scales and communicated through a variety of methods. Dietary

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messages focus predominantly on encouraging healthy store-bought food choices and conveying nutritional advice about store-bought and country foods. As federal and territorial messaging is seldom tailored to the ISR, representation of the Inuvialuit food system and consideration of local food realities is generally lacking. There is a need to evaluate dietary messages and improve collaborations among Inuvialuit country food knowledge holders, researchers, and public health dietary message disseminators at all scales to develop more locally tailored and culturally relevant messaging in the ISR. We recommend utilizing a participatory, collaborative, culture-centered approach to dietary message development and dissemination in northern Indigenous contexts.

Keywords: Indigenous health communication; food communication; dietary messaging; country food; store-bought food; community-based research; Inuit; Northwest Territories; Canada

Résumé

En matière de santé publique, les communications liées à la diète dans les communautés inuites doivent refléter un équilibre entre les avantages et les risques associés autant à la nourriture traditionnelle qu'aux aliments achetés en magasin et les méthodes pour favoriser le bien-être des Inuits. Pour cela, il manque une compréhension de la manière dont les messages diététiques – les communications de la santé publique concernant la santé et la sécurité des aliments traditionnels et achetés en magasin – sont conçus et diffusés.

S'inscrivant dans une étude sur la nourriture traditionnelle favorable à la santé, cette recherche participative visait à relever les caractéristiques des messages diététiques transmis dans la région désignée des Inuvialuit (RDI), dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, selon la perspective des diffuseurs de ces messages aux niveaux territorial, régional et local, et ce, en vue de les améliorer.

Nous avons mené une entrevue en personne (n=1) (février 2020), des entrevues téléphoniques (n=13) (mai-juin 2020) et des entrevues téléphoniques de suivi (n=5) (juin 2021) avec des informateurs clés. Nous avons abordé avec eux leur implication dans la conception et/ou la diffusion de messages quant aux bienfaits sur la santé et aux risques reliés aux aliments traditionnels et achetés en magasin dans la RDI. Les personnes interrogées comptaient des professionnels de la santé (n=5), du personnel gouvernemental (n=6) et des coordonnateurs de programmes d'alimentation ou de nutrition communautaire (n=3), répartis à Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk et Yellowknife. Une analyse thématique des 19 entretiens a été réalisée.

Nous avons observé que les messages diététiques diffusés publiquement dans la RDI sont conçus à toutes les échelles et communiqués par diverses méthodes. Ces messages visent surtout à encourager l'achat d'aliments santé et à fournir des conseils nutritionnels sur les aliments achetés et traditionnels. Puisque les communications fédérales et territoriales sont rarement adaptées à la RDI, la représentation du système alimentaire des Inuvialuit et la prise en compte des réalités en matière d'alimentation locale y sont généralement déficientes. Il s'avère nécessaire d'évaluer

les messages diététiques et d'encourager la collaboration entre les porteurs du savoir sur l'alimentation traditionnelle des Inuvialuit, les chercheurs et les diffuseurs, à tous les niveaux, de messages diététiques de santé publique, et ce, afin de concevoir des communications plus adaptées et pertinentes pour la RDI. Nous recommandons d'utiliser une approche participative et collaborative axée sur la culture pour concevoir et diffuser ces messages dans les contextes autochtones nordiques.

Introduction

Contemporary Inuit diets are comprised of both country foods (animals, game birds, fish and plants harvested from the environment for consumption) and store-bought foods (food sold in grocery stores),[1] each of which present benefits and risks to Inuit food security and holistic health (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme [AMAP], 2021; Guyot et al., 2006; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK], 2019). Country food is central to Inuit food sovereignty, personal and cultural identity, local livelihoods and economies, and holistic health, including physical, mental, cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic dimensions (Beaumier et al., 2015; Council of Canadian Academies [CCA], 2014; Damman et al., 2008; Ford, 2009; ITK, 2021). Inuit food sovereignty is "the right of all Inuit to define their own hunting, gathering, fishing, land, and water policies; the right to define what is sustainably, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate for the distribution of food and to maintain ecological health; and the right to obtain and maintain practices that ensure access to tools needed to obtain, process, store, and consume traditional foods" (Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2020, p. 17). Federal colonial policies including relocation, settlement, and residential schooling have detrimentally impacted Inuit control of their food system (ITK, 2021). A movement toward Inuit food sovereignty asserts Inuit self-determination over and revitalization of the Inuit food system through both the practice and sharing of the requisite skills and knowledge for harvesting, gathering, and preparing country foods in a sustainable way (Settee & Shukla, 2020). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit or IQ (often described as Inuit traditional knowledge but more accurately understood as Inuit ways of knowing and ways of being) includes Inuit cultural beliefs, knowledge, values and skills relating to the Inuit food system (Tagalik, 2009).

Climate change increasingly challenges Inuit food security by compromising the availability, accessibility, and quality of country foods for Inuit harvesters, accelerating the nutrition transition toward non-nutrient dense store-bought foods (Furgal & Seguin, 2006; Ford, 2009; Guyot et al., 2006; Kuhnlein & Chan, 2000; Wesche & Chan, 2010). Further, elevated concentrations of certain environmental contaminants (e.g., Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and mercury) in Arctic environments represent a concerning source of dietary exposure to contaminants through country food consumption, creating an 'Arctic Dilemma' whereby the health risks and benefits associated with country food consumption must be weighed (AMAP, 2016, 2021;

[1] The terms 'store-bought foods' and 'market foods' were used interchangeably by study researchers and participants, referring to food sold in grocery stores.

Donaldson et al., 2010; Furgal et al., 2005; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016; Lemire et al., 2015). This 'Arctic Dilemma' is the central focus of Arctic environmental health risk communication research today (AMAP 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2019; Furgal et al., 2005; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016; Lemire et al., 2015). Health risk communication comprises culturally appropriate messages and advice that aim to minimize harm and improve health (AMAP, 2015; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016). These studies have guided our transdisciplinary Country Foods for Good Health (CFGH) project by providing an understanding of effective country food risk communication strategies in Inuit communities. However, none have characterized how messages are developed and disseminated nor addressed best practices for developing regionally- and locally-tailored country food messaging; we seek to address these research gaps.

On a broader scale, health communication aims to improve health by informing, influencing, and motivating individual and community knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and behaviours through communication strategies (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; Schiavo, 2014; Thomas, 2006). In Canada, nested within health communication, nutrition communication—the transmission of nutritional information to influence knowledge, attitudes, or behaviours—is largely developed and disseminated federally by Health Canada (Gavaravarapu, 2019; Health Canada, 2016; Mayfield, 2020). The dominant discourse around food is primarily biomedical, reflecting ongoing colonial narratives of food and nutritional health, while largely excluding Indigenous food systems and worldviews (Dawson, 2020).

Store-bought foods are typically the predominant source of dietary calories consumed in remote Inuit communities (Kuhnlein et al., 2004). Of these, highly processed, non-nutrient dense foods are the most affordable, and thus oft-consumed; therefore, they pose significant risks to human health, including higher risk of chronic disease (Blanchet & Rochette, 2008; Egeland et al., 2010; Fillion et al., 2014; Kenny et al., 2018; Kuhnlein et al., 2004). Nonetheless, store-bought foods have been largely excluded from Arctic risk communication research; thus, there is a significant knowledge gap about store-bought food dietary messaging in Arctic Indigenous communities and even less is known at the national, territorial, and regional levels in Canada (Bjerregaard & Mulvad, 2012; Jeppesen et al., 2011). Of the studies addressing store-bought food messaging in Canadian Inuit communities, the Healthy Foods North program (Kolahdooz et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2010) described and evaluated dietary intervention programs promoting healthy eating, but not dietary messages communicated via these programs. Very little research examining risk communication and risk perception of contaminants in country foods has been conducted in the Northwest Territories (NWT) or Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR), and no studies have explicitly addressed dietary messaging about both country and store-bought food choices and processes (Ratelle et al., 2018; Reinfort, 2015). Findings from existing studies support the need for balanced messaging about country foods and engagement of communities during message development and dissemination, which our study builds upon (Ratelle et al., 2018; Reinfort, 2015). However, preferences for collaborations and methods of incorporating and communicating Indigenous knowledge in messaging remains understudied (Gyapay et al., 2022). Further, given the exclusive focus on country food risk messaging, studies addressing dietary messaging broadly (including store-bought foods) are greatly needed across all regions of the NWT.

Inuit residing in Inuit Nunangat (the Inuit homeland in Arctic Canada) experience the highest prevalence of food insecurity among all Indigenous peoples living in

developed countries (ITK, 2021). Further, they are disproportionately impacted by climate change, given that the Arctic is warming at over twice the rate as elsewhere on Earth (Vincent et al., 2015). Recognizing that rapid environmental changes threaten the quality and safety of Arctic foods and consequently Inuit socio-cultural health, it is imperative that Inuit have access to evidence-informed and culturally relevant dietary information promoting healthy and safe diets and food processes (AMAP 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2019; ITK, 2021; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016). Territorial and regional public health departments in the NWT currently communicate information and advice about food-related choices and processes involving country and/or store-bought foods to NWT communities in the form of dietary messaging about harvesting, buying, storing, preparing, preserving, cooking, and consuming food, with the aims of reducing harm and promoting good health. For example, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT, n.d.) published the "NWT Traditional Food Fact Sheet Series", a resource promoting the nutritional benefits of consuming country foods found in the NWT and safe preparation practices; however, there has been no research to characterize how it was developed and disseminated or to evaluate its effectiveness in initiating dietary change. To date, limited attention has been paid to dietary messaging about country foods beyond the field of Arctic environmental health risk communication research, and even less so to dietary messaging about store-bought foods in the Arctic.

Building on long-term research relationships with the Inuvialuit communities of Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk, and their interests in positive dietary messaging about country foods, this community-based participatory study sought to characterize current public health dietary messaging that guides food choice and food-related processes in the ISR. Working with territorial, regional, and local public health dietary message disseminators, our objectives were to understand who develops and disseminates dietary messages in/for the ISR, how the messages are communicated, what topics the messages address, and which gaps exist in current messaging. This research improves understanding about the effective promotion of healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate food choices in ways that support Indigenous food sovereignty.

Methods

Research approach

This study employed a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach with the aim of conducting socially-just and culturally inclusive research in partnership with territorial, regional and community partners (Israel et al., 2012) in the NWT, with a focus on the ISR. By utilizing a CBPR approach, these partners were involved in a series of community meetings in 2018 to plan the larger CFGH project and

in February 2020 to review the plans for our study; this approach legitimizes Inuvialuit community knowledge, perspectives and preferences, which have historically been exploited and marginalized in the research process (Jull et al., 2017). Given our inability to collaboratively complete in-person research activities with community partners during the COVID-19 pandemic, we shifted to remote methods, drawing on our existing research relationships with territorial, regional and community partners. Research updates were shared via bi-annual newsletters and virtual group meetings in 2020 and 2021. Reflecting our participatory approach, both the Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk Hunters and Trappers Committees (THTC, PHTC) and Community Corporations (TCC, PCC) provided letters of support.

Participant sample and recruitment

Participant inclusion criteria were selected based on outcomes from focus groups, community meetings and consultation with Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk Community Corporations and Hunters and Trappers Committees during the CFGH project tour in February 2020. Using an internet search, we developed a list of health professionals, government employees and community nutrition or cooking program coordinators who appeared to be involved in developing and/or disseminating dietary messaging in or for the ISR. Three levels of dietary message disseminators were included: 1) *Territorial* - GNWT Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) in Yellowknife; 2) *Regional* - Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA) Beaufort-Delta Region in Inuvik; and 3) *Local* – community members in Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk. Federal and national dietary message disseminators were excluded from this study given the scope of the CFGH project. We then employed a snowball sampling approach, where three representatives from the GNWT HSS and IRC identified additional relevant contacts. Potential participants were recruited and followed-up with by telephone and email.

Data sources and procedures

From February to June 2020, we conducted one in-person interview and thirteen telephone interviews with key informants to characterize how dietary messages are developed and disseminated in the ISR. We conducted follow-up telephone interviews with five participants in June 2021, building on the findings from the original interviews. Two key informants (Participants 8 and 9) chose to be interviewed together; all other interviews were done individually. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio-recorded with permission. Consent forms were used, and participants provided either verbal or written consent.

All interviews were conducted using interview guides (Appendix). We primarily asked open-ended questions and used probes to elicit further information and clarify participant responses. The questions focused on the types of messages that are currently communicated to the public in the ISR, how and by whom these messages are developed and communicated, and barriers and facilitators to disseminating messaging. After the first interview, we transformed the original interview guide into three tailored guides for each participant category to promote clarity and included additional questions to further explore topics raised by the first participant.

The audio recordings were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis and Saldaña's (2016) first and second cycle coding methods. An integrative approach was employed, beginning with provisional coding and

ending with descriptive coding using NVivo® version 12 qualitative analysis software (Bradley et al., 2007; Saldaña, 2016). We combined inductive and deductive coding approaches to identify and code transcripts, based on the aforementioned focal areas. Initially, we used an a priori list of research-generated codes based on findings from focus groups conducted in February 2020 as part of the larger CFGH project. We then applied an inductive approach by assigning additional codes and modifying existing codes. Peer briefings were conducted throughout coding to further support the rigor and trustworthiness of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). We discussed interview findings with territorial and regional project partners in February 2021, and they were also involved in reviewing this manuscript. This process was key to further building trusting relationships with project partners. This study was granted ethical approval from the University of Waterloo (ORE#41577) and a Scientific Research License (No. 16690) from the Aurora Research Institute.

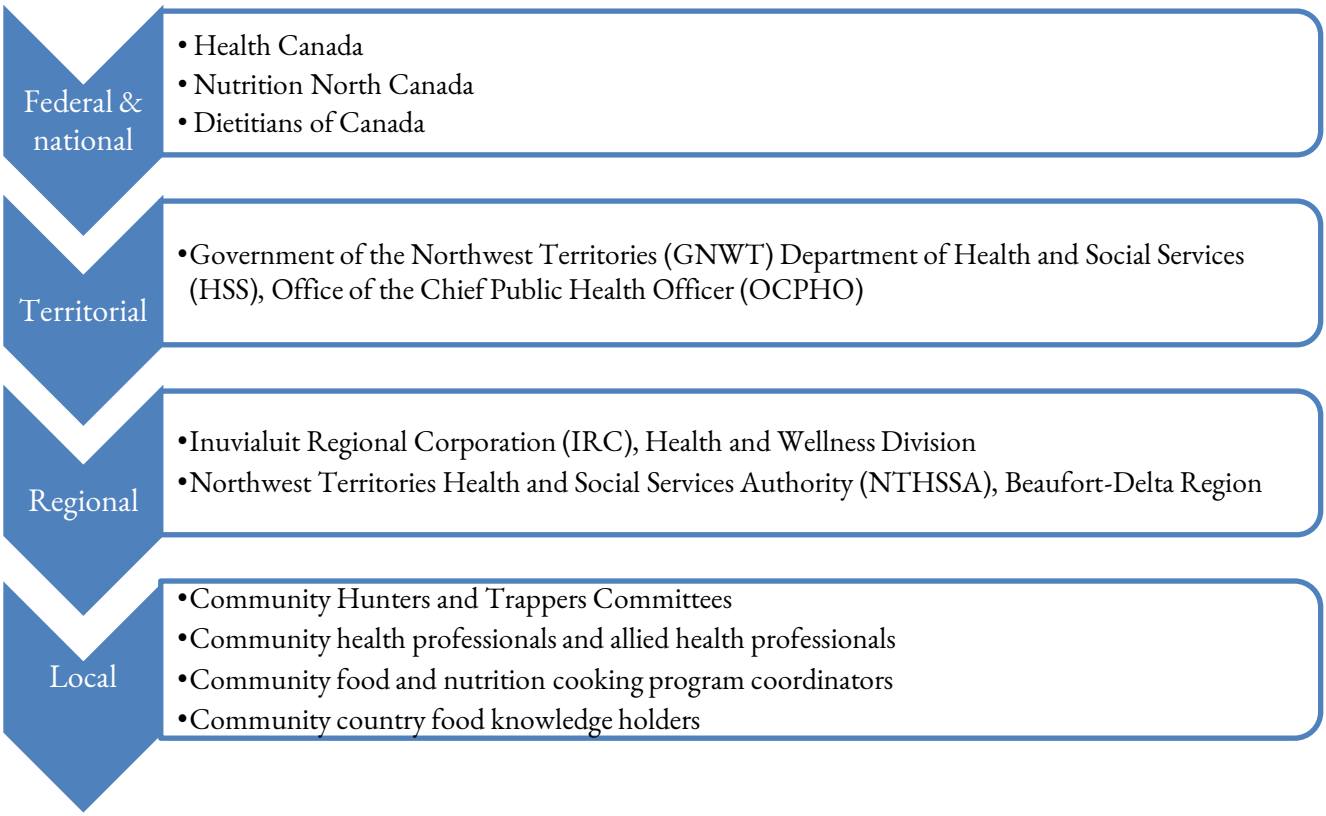
Results

Six key themes were identified during thematic analysis relating to the development and dissemination of dietary messaging in the ISR. These include: participant involvement in dietary messaging, types of messages being communicated, methods of dissemination, special considerations, barriers to message development and dissemination, and facilitators of message development and dissemination. In this section, we discuss each of the themes in turn, and include relevant quotations that reflect broader participant perspectives.

Involvement in the development of dietary messages for/in the ISR

Dietary messages for/in the ISR are developed federally and refined through three distinct mechanisms: territorially through the GNWT, regionally through both the Inuvialuit governance body and the regional health authority of the GNWT, and locally through various organizations and programs (see Figure 1). Methods for dietary message development vary based on the type of message being conveyed, and on both the organization(s) involved and roles of key public health stakeholders therein. Activities at each level are discussed below.

Figure 1: Current public health stakeholders involved in the development and/or dissemination of dietary messages in/for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region



Territorial level

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Health and Social Services (HSS), Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) develops and disseminates messaging about the safety of country food consumption through site-specific consumption notices issued by the Chief Public Health Officer (e.g., site specific fish consumption advice) and country food fact sheets developed in collaboration with academic researchers. The HSS collaborates with researchers, either by contacting them with questions about contaminants and country foods, or by using information submitted by researchers to inform their messaging. The OCPHO Environmental Health team aims to review and provide feedback on research findings before they are shared with communities. However, this process is not perfect, and participants indicated the need for researchers to keep them better informed and seek their feedback prior to releasing messaging. Researchers who have questions about health messaging often reach out to HSS to partner on research projects.

General dietary messaging about the nutritional and cultural benefits of both country and store-bought foods is developed by the Territorial Nutritionist in collaboration with dietitians, other HSS employees (e.g., communications unit), Indigenous partners, and the OCPHO following federal/national messaging protocols (e.g., Health Canada, Dietitians of Canada).

This messaging informs territory-wide initiatives and specific programs in ISR (e.g., Healthy Families Collective Kitchen promoting healthy food skills and knowledge to parents). Messaging and direction for messaging is not developed for all HSS programs, nor for all health professionals delivering health messaging in the ISR.

Regional level

The IRC Health and Wellness Division involves and employs local trusted knowledge holders through their programs, leveraging Inuvialuit knowledge about healthy and safe country food practices through these knowledge holders' teachings and thus obviating the need for specific messaging. If dietary messages are communicated by the IRC, they often come from federal and territorial public health departments (such as Health Canada or GNWT HSS) and then are filtered through an IRC board that internally reviews and revises the messages as the board members know and understand how the specific messages will be interpreted by communities.

> "Truthfully, not a lot of specific messaging. It's more, it happens ... more organically where someone has a reputation for being knowledgeable and you just make sure that they're involved in the program or service. And so the idea being that just by the very nature of being there and being present, whatever traditional [Inuvialuit] knowledge needs to be respected will... I don't see a lot of very specific messaging. Like the way that government would do it would be like, you know "eat seal because it's high in vitamin D" or you know, "process muktuk like this because of botulism". You don't see that kind of specific messaging coming from our office very often." (Participant 3)

Dietitians from the GNWT Health and Social Services Authority Beaufort-Delta Region are involved in providing dietary messaging to clients and communities through one-on-one consultations and community programs. They also conduct presentations about nutrition, healthy food choices, diabetes, and cooking, incorporating both traditional and healthy store-bought foods.

Local level

Community Health Representatives (CHRs), workers who provide community health services in collaboration with local medical professionals, select topics they believe will be interesting and relevant to their community, and develop topic-specific programs, presentations, posters or resources. The CHRs receive information from the GNWT HSS and CHRs in other communities. In the ISR, the regional dietitians in Inuvik train the CHRs to deliver Nutrition North Canada (NNC) nutrition education programming.

Country food knowledge holders (e.g., Elders and harvesters) communicate dietary messages themselves by sharing Inuvialuit knowledge about the country food system. One participant stated,

> "Well an example, since COVID started IRC [Inuvialuit Regional Corporation] has been providing funds for people to go out onto the land and to ensure that their food security issues are addressed, and communities are always doing hunts and different things to help provide for the communities. I think the communities really, they want – they are already taking care of their needs that way. And I think they message themselves, I don't know [laughs]. I mean it's part of tradition, right?" (Participants 8)

The local Hunters and Trappers Committees, responsible for overseeing harvesting rights and

management functions in each ISR community, provide general messaging promoting country foods and safe food preparation practices.

> "Again, you know, you're not going to see them talking about things in specific ways. You're not going to be like "Oh yes, eat char, high in vitamin C, saturated fats." You're not going to see that. But they will say more general things, like "people like it, it makes them feel good, people are healthier when they eat their country food". Stuff like that...If you probe a bit you know, you can glean more information, maybe something along the lines of like "don't process muktuk when it's too warm out."... But again, you won't —yeah you won't see them use that specific terminology, they just say more general things." (Participant 3)

Importantly, not all participants are involved in dietary message development and instead communicate messages that are developed from federal, regional or territorial resources or program curriculums. Furthermore, not all participants develop messages in or for the ISR. For example, the GNWT HSS OCPHO Environmental Health team is not currently involved in developing country food contaminant notices for the ISR.

> "There have been various researchers who have consulted with the HSS on whether or not country food advisories were needed to be issued based on the data. I am not aware of any country food contaminant notices that the HSS may have issued for the ISR." (Participant 6)

Some messages are developed directly by participants themselves by drawing on their knowledge and experiences; federal (Health Canada, Nutrition North Canada), national (Community Food Centers of Canada), territorial (GNWT HSS OCPHO), regional (Beaufort Delta Health Authority, IRC Health and Wellness Division), and local sources (e.g., from other organizations and individuals, Elders, health centers); from the internet, university researchers, or a combination thereof. For example, a local health professional described creating seasonal posters promoting country foods available to harvest in their community. These posters included images of local harvesters, information about traditional methods of processing and storing the country food, and its nutrient content.

Messages from the GNWT HSS OCPHO and the IRC Health and Wellness Division are developed for the general public. When messaging is targeted, the primary target populations are pregnant women and mothers with babies/children, individuals with diabetes, or individuals of low economic status. This messaging is often delivered through diet-related programming specific to these populations.

Types of dietary messages being communicated

Federal, territorial and regional dietary messages disseminated in the ISR by territorial, regional and local disseminators are predominantly focused on store-bought-food. These messages tend to address healthy food choices and nutrition-related information and advice through the promotion of label reading, portion sizes, unhealthy store-bought foods to avoid, how to prepare and cook meals using store-bought foods, and budgeting tips for grocery shopping. As one participant described:

> "...in regards to store-bought food, I think overall our messaging is kind of more around trying to encourage people to pick less processed foods as much as possible...we do

> have a session on label reading as well, in which we try to just encourage people to look at the labels and teach them what things to look out for...as far as deciding what foods would be considered kind of more nutritious [and] which would be less nutritious based on certain kind of indicators on the nutrition facts label." (Participant 7)

The more limited messaging about country foods tends to focus on the nutritional benefits of consuming such foods, with some mention of cultural and economic benefits. For example, a participant indicated that:

> "The GNWT HSS encourages people to eat country food. Country food is a very important part of the diet and traditions of the people living in the Territory. For example, for fish, HSS have emphasized that "fish is good for you, it is high in protein, vitamin B and Omega 3 fatty acids". And, we say the same thing for moose as well." (Participant 6)

Although disseminated less often, participants mentioned additional categories of dietary messages they communicate, including messages about additives to avoid in processed store-bought foods, environmental contaminants and zoonotic diseases in country foods, traditional hunting and harvesting practices and values, and how to safely prepare and store country foods. One participant described the following message about country foods and contaminants that they provide during programming:

> "If I bring in the dietitian...we'll talk about the benefits and also some of the precautions that could be taken with say pregnant and breastfeeding women with regards to char and seal and beluga with the high mercury content." (Participant 12)

In general, participants noted that they generally promote country foods as healthy, or healthier, than store-bought foods and emphasize the importance of eating country foods when available. Participants also highlighted that country foods are safe to eat, promoting the commonly cited message that the health benefits of country foods outweigh the safety risks. As one participant stated:

> "...the messaging is pretty much, like, [country food is] basically always a good choice... what my one message has always been, and I always continue to promote it, and I think other people do too around here who are working with food and with our communities, is that the benefits of consuming country food will almost always outweigh the risks. That's my message and I would say just about anyone who has worked here for any length of time...will usually in some way or another promote that message as well." (Participant 3)

Participants noted a gap in current messaging promoting country foods and expressed their desire to improve country food messaging in the future. A participant expressed this sentiment by saying:

> "I would have to say, in the past our messaging around it has been probably more focused on market food. And I guess we do bring up nutritional content of traditional foods, like maybe very briefly. But that was one of the things we reflected on over this past year, was like 'we need to do a better job of highlighting that.' We need to do better, have more of a focus in the nutrition component of that workshop on traditional foods and how healthy it is for people. And why, and compare it to market food as well." (Participant 7)

Methods of dissemination

Dietary messages are communicated to ISR communities in multiple ways (Table 1). Common methods of dietary message dissemination include

individual consultations with health professionals and group food and cooking programs; written documents (e.g., posters, factsheets); radio announcements; and the internet (e.g., social media posts and websites).

Table 1: Current methods utilized by territorial and regional health professionals, government employees, and community nutrition or food program coordinators to communicate public health dietary messages in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR).

Methods of dietary message dissemination in the ISR	Examples
In person	• One-on-one consultations with health professionals • Community food and cooking programs • Community food workshops led by the IRC and Inuvik greenhouse • Community presentations (schools, cooking classes) from regional dietitians and local health professionals and allied health professionals • Community healthy living fairs • Word of mouth • Hands-on participation and observation of traditional harvesting activities led by country food knowledge holders
Written documents	• Posters (digital copies on social media and websites; hard copies displayed in communities, provided at health consultations and food workshops) • Newsletters (digital and hard copies) • Factsheets (digital and hard copies) • Country food consumption notices[2] (digital and hard copies)
Audio and digital	• Radio announcements and news items on local and territorial stations • GNWT websites • Facebook and Instagram (community Facebook pages, IRC, NTHSSA, GNWT)

Not all participants were involved in delivering dietary messages directly to the public. Direct, in person contact with public audiences is limited or less frequent at the territorial level. Community health professionals, allied health professionals and cooking/nutrition program workers or coordinators typically deliver messaging on the ground. Territorial message developers play an indirect but important role. One territorial-level participant explained:

> "...I don't have direct public contact. My contact is through community workers, and they're the ones who are delivering the message. They are the ones who are employing the tools. They are the ones who are reaching the public..." (Participant 4)

Considerations regarding food quality and safety

Participants indicated that community members generally perceive country foods to be safe and of good quality, and that the nutritional and cultural benefits of eating country foods outweigh the potential risks. A

[2] While participants often used the term 'advisories', GNWT HSS now uses 'consumption notices' to communicate public health advisories about a country food in a specific area.

few participants were concerned about the safety and quality of country foods due to contaminants and preparation/storage techniques, while some were not at all concerned. They noted that the reporting of contaminated wild meat has increased and that younger generations are less knowledgeable about how to safely prepare country foods. For example, a participant noted,

> "...even like our beluga, some—like we ferment some of it, so you really have to have knowledge as to how to prepare it properly, otherwise you'll poison yourself...There have been some people are kind of leery of that, like especially the younger generation. Like they don't know how to—most people don't know how to prepare and preserve things." (Participant 14)

Participants generally considered country foods to be of better quality than the store-bought foods that are available and affordable in ISR communities. Some participants expressed concerns and distrust about the quality and safety of store-bought foods given the negative history with the Northwest Company and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples through historical and ongoing federal colonial policies and practices.

Barriers to dietary message development and dissemination

Participants identified several barriers to message development and dissemination in/for ISR communities. Local dietary message disseminators often develop messages and programming themselves with limited access to dietary and nutrition information and resources. Limitations occur due to the irregular visits of regional health professionals to communities and high staff turnover. A participant remarked,

> "One of the biggest barriers in the Territories is turnover. We have tremendous turnover...So, every time there's turnover then you have to start all over again." (Participant 4)

Participants noted that misinformation or mixed information sometimes resulted from the involvement of multiple health professionals in disseminating health messages in the communities and the inability of dietitians to visit frequently. This is compounded by poor access to information technology (i.e., Internet), which could offer an important source of health and diet-related knowledge. Furthermore, they noted instances where false or harmful dietary messages were communicated to communities by researchers who were unprepared to answer community questions about whether certain country foods are safe to eat. A participant further described this by saying,

> "I mean sometimes it's like the researcher doesn't even... they don't plan to talk about health at all, but then so often, especially when you're talking about country foods, people's main question is, "well, is it safe to eat?" And so I think if a researcher kind of maybe is unprepared for that question, they start talking about health, even though that is not necessarily where their expertise lies. They can kind of be caught unaware, and then they are the ones communicating health messages that are maybe not even true." (Participant 11)

Participants explained that in the past, researchers have released confusing and inaccurate messages about contaminants in country foods and health risk, which could have been prevented had the OCPHO been consulted. For example, one participant explained,

> "There was one time when we heard about the recommendations from a researcher and we were puzzled. I do recommend that researchers check in with the HSS to have a

> conversation on health messaging before it goes public." (Participant 6)

Participants commented that community members often disregard or distrust public health messages about contaminants in country foods. One participant explained this distrust by saying,

> "And sometimes, I know in another community that I lived in, they would get a message and they'd just kind of laugh and say, "Well, we've never had that issue. And all these steps to prevent it, we do it a different way and we will continue doing it that way." (Participant 8)

Further, participants explained that some communities no longer trust dietary messaging as a result of poor country food health risk messaging delivered by researchers and the government. Some GNWT dietary message disseminators recognized that not all their messages about contaminants and country foods have been helpful—some have been harmful in past—and identified the need to further improve their messaging.

> "... because obviously like the [GNWT] health department has caused harm in the past in terms of our messaging, and how that has led to people not eating fish, or not even eating beluga. And we really don't want that to happen because obviously there's such enormous health benefits to eating these country foods, especially compared to market food...something we're still trying to work out, is how do we talk about contaminants without completely terrifying people, and have that feel like the only thing that they take away from the messaging?" (Participant 11)

Relating to dietary messages delivered via cooking programs, regional and local health professionals and allied health professionals noted that their materials typically originate from southern programs and focus solely on store-bought foods, many of which are not affordable or available in the ISR. As such, they often have to modify recipes and cooking program curricula to incorporate country foods and appeal to ISR communities. A participant explained,

> "And that's kind of a challenge for [us] because we constantly have to modify programs that are given to us. Or we just have to create them ourselves." (Participant 2)

Another participant described the challenge of receiving recipes from the GNWT that focus solely on store-bought foods by saying,

> "...when we get stuff from the nutritionist, or from the health promotions in Yellowknife, it's all like store-bought foods." (Participant 14)

Regional and local health professionals and allied health professionals expressed the need to improve their access to information and resources to be able to answer nutrition and diet-related questions that community members raise. A participant made this request by saying,

> "I wouldn't mind to have some kind of I guess guide to follow on, you know, what—I wouldn't mind to have the information there so that if someone came in and they asked me a question on, you know, 'How can I buy healthier food?' or, 'What do I think is healthy for my kids?' or something like that. You know, I wouldn't mind to have the information there where I could just provide it to the individual..." (Participant 10)

As one local health professional noted, if they are unable to find an answer to a diet-related question on reputable sites, they resort to a general web search, highlighting the need for improved access to trusted sources.

> "If I'm stuck, say like in Health Canada, I find that if I can't find it, then I'll Google." (Participant 1)

Barriers to consistent messaging in the ISR exist due to periodic misalignment between the regional and local health professionals. One participant noted questioning the dietary advice that a physician working in the region provided to the public.

> "So sometimes it's like 'yeah the doctor told me to do this so I'm doing that'. Like 'OK, that's fine, you know, if it works for you' kind of thing. But sometimes they'll be like 'my doctor told me this, why?' And I'll be like 'I don't know'". (Participant 2)

Furthermore, there are few guidance documents for dietitians and community health workers to use when delivering nutrition education and skills training to ISR communities. As such, it is difficult to ascertain whether knowledge and skill development are consistent across the region. A participant expressed this challenge saying,

> "...from a territorial viewpoint, we haven't put together a guidance document for small groups which outlines key messages and provides speaking notes. We don't have that...They [dietitians and nutrition program coordinators] teach what they know and may have lesson plans. Apart from saying 'traditional food is good food', I don't know what else they say." (Participant 4)

The high cost of purchasing country foods and regulations for selling country foods in the ISR have hindered the development of programming utilizing country foods. For example, a participant described how these challenges have made it difficult for local cooking program coordinators to incorporate country foods into their programming,

> "...even though it's funded by the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, it's really tough to get native [country] food, very tough. The cost of acquiring native [country] food is expensive. Like people—when people hunt here, you know, they have to pay for their gas, their time, their ammunition, all that stuff, so it's hard to get specific native [country] foods... And there's lots of restrictions, yeah, with the Hunters and Trappers." (Participant 14)

Finally, evaluation of dietary messaging appears to be lacking. While participants described evaluations they have conducted for cooking and food programming, no evaluations of dietary messages or methods of message dissemination appear to have been conducted by territorial or regional public health departments or other researchers in the NWT. As one participant explained, this may be due to challenges regarding capacity to conduct evaluations in the NWT, including a lack of resources and budget.

Facilitators of dietary message development and dissemination

Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration during message development, particularly among researchers, Inuvialuit knowledge holders, the GNWT HSS, and health professionals in the communities. One participant suggested the following,

> "I think researchers need to just check in...with the department here and say "Hey, what do you think of what we're recommending? And can I recommend this action? What are your thoughts?" If we have any thoughts we will look into it and then convey it as well, we will do our best to help out." (Participant 6)

Further, a participant highlighted the need for community-led message development, promoting a decolonizing approach:

> "...You know, it has to be what people want and not what we tell them they should want, because that's where all our problems started." (Participant 13)

It was noted that Elders and Indigenous knowledge holders need to be actively included in the development of messaging to ensure this process is grounded in local culture, values and practices, in ways that celebrate the local country food system and Indigenous knowledge. A participant expressed this need by explaining,

> "I think that gathering messaging from those knowledge keepers or Elders is a really important component of any messaging. Communities are inundated with messages and information from outsider organizations who mean well, but maybe they didn't sit down and talk to the Elder or, you know, they're just kind of sending out the message that Health Canada sends out, or the message is contradictory maybe to what they know. And so, you know they've been hunting and trapping for hundreds and hundreds of years, and to get a message maybe about, I don't know, salmonella or something—find out how they've addressed those issues." (Participant 8)

Participants explained the importance of developing balanced messaging (i.e., including not just risks but also benefits related to certain foods), keeping messaging about health risks and country foods general and positive, and promoting country food. It was noted that being familiar with the political and cultural community contexts is beneficial when developing messages to ensure they are relevant and appropriate.

Participants described that messaging is best received by the public when it is delivered in person, and involves hands-on components (e.g., cooking-based programs and on-the-land programs), discussion and storytelling. For example, a participant said,

> "And like it goes back to that traditional [Inuvialuit] knowledge and how things are done up here, like people don't want to read a flyer from the government...or from whoever. They want a conversation, they want to sit down, have a cup of tea..." (Participant 13)

A common view amongst interviewees was the importance of involving local residents in the communication of messages. A participant explained,

> "Well, I think it's really important... you have to consider who the voice is that's giving the message...And so for us it's really important to find someone who is passionate in the community, employ them, don't ask them to volunteer...Give them the skills, give them the knowledge, let them be the voice. Because it works so much better if somebody who understands the local culture and who has lived in the local culture explains these new ways of doing things or better ways of doing things." (Participant 13)

Participants indicated several practices that improve public reception of dietary messages. Disseminators are encouraged to use local pictures, visuals and social media; ask the public questions and listen rather than just talk; present messages clearly and simply; utilize engaging programming to deliver messaging; and incorporate programming with Elders. Participants also highlighted the need to review messages prior to communication, as is being done by the IRC and GNWT HSS, to ensure appropriateness and improve reception by the public.

Discussion

Our study sought to characterize dietary messaging in the ISR from the perspective of territorial, regional and local dietary message disseminators to further improve message communication in the region. We found that dietary messages disseminated to the public in the ISR are developed at all scales (federal, territorial, regional and local) and communicated by a range of people, including territorial and regional government health professionals; allied health professionals and representatives; regional and local food program coordinators; academic researchers; local leaders; and country food knowledge holders. At the local level, knowledge holders (e.g., Elders and harvesters) communicate their own messaging about country foods through the sharing of Inuvialuit knowledge while harvesting and preparing country food in their community, often supported through territorial and regional government-funded programming.

Our findings indicate that messages developed at the federal level are typically not designed for northern Indigenous communities, and that territorial messages often lack tailoring for Inuvialuit communities, whereas regional and local messaging are designed for the ISR with consideration of local culture, realities, food availability and preferences. This aligns with other Arctic environmental health risk communication literature, which indicates that messages are most effective when they are regionally and locally tailored, providing information and advice that accounts for social, economic, cultural and health factors specific to Indigenous populations (AMAP, 2015, 2021; Boyd & Furgal, 2019, 2022; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016).

Regarding the types of messages developed for/in the ISR by public health departments, our findings indicate that messages focus predominantly on promoting healthy store-bought food choices and providing nutritional information about store-bought foods. Messaging about country foods from public health departments typically promotes the nutritional benefits associated with country foods and the safety of such foods from an environmental contaminant lens. Given that dietary messages are largely developed for the ISR by public health departments located outside the ISR, messages focus heavily on western biomedical conceptions of food and physical health. These findings align with scholar Leslie Dawson's (2020) explanation that the dominant biomedical narrative of food in Canada reflects a Eurocentric worldview, framing food as nutrition for physical health, and overlooking Indigenous worldviews of food and health, which includes connections to physical, cultural, spiritual and mental health. For Inuit, the practice of harvesting, processing and consuming country foods is integral to community identity, cultural identity and well-being (CCA, 2014; ITK, 2021). Further, Inuit (and other Indigenous peoples) perceive food as alive and sacred, extending beyond the Western view of food primarily as nutrition for physical health (Settee & Shukla, 2020).

The results of our study illustrate that when country foods are included in dietary messaging they are promoted as safe and nutritionally superior to store-bought foods, with some mention of cultural benefits related to harvesting, preparation and consumption. Importantly, although current dietary messaging in the ISR focusses more on store-bought foods, participants expressed their desire to develop more country food messaging to better reflect local culture and diets. Some participants expressed concerns with dietary messaging and distrust among Inuvialuit, which has previously been identified in Arctic risk communication literature

(AMAP, 2021; Boyd et al., 2019). This distrust stems largely from the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples by the Canadian government; colonial policies and practices that (have) harm(ed) Indigenous food systems, cultures and wellbeing; and alarmist messaging from researchers and the government about high levels of contaminants in country foods. Indigenous involvement in message development and communication is essential for tackling this distrust (AMAP, 2021; Myers & Furgal, 2006).

In the ISR, the barriers to dietary message development and dissemination that we documented are similar to those described in Arctic environmental health risk communication studies regarding contaminants in country foods. Challenges include a lack of collaboration among stakeholders involved in dissemination, communication of messaging that communities do not trust, and lack of inclusion of Indigenous culture and knowledge (AMAP, 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2022; Furgal et al., 2005; Myers & Furgal, 2006). Likewise, the facilitators of dietary message dissemination emphasized by our study participants reflect best methods described in environmental health risk communication studies related to communications about contaminant risk in country foods. These facilitators include the provision of balanced and positive messaging about country foods, the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the development and communication of messaging, the development of messages that align with a community's cultural beliefs, the use of trustworthy people to deliver messages, and the dissemination of simple, engaging messaging in person and via social media (AMAP, 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2019; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016; Ratelle et al., 2018; Reinfort, 2015). Similar to the recommendations raised by some of our participants, Bjerregaard and Mulvad (2012) determined that simple dietary guidelines promoting cultural, social and physical benefits of harvesting, preparing and eating foods are preferred over detailed advice about serving sizes and food groups. Further, previous research by Sharma et al. (2010) reiterates the importance of involving locals in nutrition message development to ensure that messages are culturally appropriate and reflect community values.

Our findings indicate that dietary messaging in the ISR draws predominantly on a Western biomedical knowledge system and worldview of health and food, elucidating the need for better representation of Inuvialuit worldviews, culture and values in dietary messaging, which can be achieved through co-development. We suggest strengthening collaborations among ISR dietary message developers and communicators at all scales, especially with local country food knowledge holders and community leadership, to better reflect Inuvialuit knowledge and worldviews related to food and health. Our recommendation reflects calls made in Arctic environmental health risk communication literature for increased inclusion of Inuit perspectives in risk communication and food security initiatives via collaborations with affected communities to ensure that messages are grounded in local culture and worldviews (AMAP, 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2019; 2022; ITK 2021; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016). Further, as dietary messaging in the NWT predominantly follows a top-down model of information delivery, more participatory methods of message development and communication are needed. This inverts the mainstream model of public health communications to rather promote community-driven and culturally relevant messaging in ways that further develop trusting relationships and increase message effectiveness (Boyd & Furgal, 2022; Dutta-Bergman, 2016; Gyapay et al., 2022; Krümmel & Gilman, 2016). Similar to the Two-Eyed Seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2015), we support

the braiding of strengths of both Western science and Inuvialuit knowledge to develop and communicate culturally relevant messaging in the ISR. We encourage non-Indigenous NWT dietary message disseminators at all scales to support Inuvialuit participation in dietary message development and dissemination to shift away from creating messaging *for* the ISR to working *with* and *by* Inuvialuit for such purposes. This is supported by other studies that recognize the need for public health message communication efforts to shift away from a top-down model of information delivery towards a more participatory communication approach, empowering communities to make healthy and safe food choices grounded in both science and Indigenous knowledge (AMAP, 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2022; Dutta-Bergman, 2016; ITK, 2019).

While dietary messaging is important, knowledge and awareness about healthy and safe food choices and behaviours is clearly only one factor that influences Indigenous peoples' ability to engage in positive dietary change (Willows, 2005). An interplay of environmental, social, socio-economic, and individual factors and inequities influence dietary decisions (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Marcone et al., 2020). Therefore, continued efforts and policies to improve the social determinants of Inuvialuit health (e.g., food security, climate change and environmental contaminants, culture, housing, employment, education and mental wellness) are greatly needed in addition to locally tailored, culturally meaningful health communication to promote healthy, safe and culturally appropriate food choices and behaviours (ITK, 2014).

While our findings support the call for increased collaboration with Indigenous communities during the development and communication of dietary messages by public health departments, it remains unclear whether involvement in the co-development of culture-centered dietary messages is desired by all territorial, regional, and local disseminators in the NWT and if so, what this process should look like in the ISR (Gyapay et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is a need to determine the nature of Inuvialuit knowledge and local perspectives about food that residents would like to see shared in messaging, and how this knowledge should be gathered and communicated. Reflecting a similar gap in message evaluation identified in the literature, the effectiveness of dietary messages in the ISR remains understudied (AMAP, 2015; Boyd & Furgal, 2022). Thus, future evaluations are needed to determine facilitators of communication and reception of these messages from the perspective of the public. Recognizing that we only interviewed territorial, regional and local dietary message disseminators in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk and Paulatuk, further research is needed to account for the varying perspectives and experiences of federal, national, and local dietary message disseminators in the additional ISR communities.

Although we have identified a need to further increase Inuvialuit involvement in dietary message development and dissemination in and for the ISR, we acknowledge the noteworthy steps taken by territorial and regional public health departments in the NWT to develop messages in partnership with Indigenous peoples in ways that better align with cultural beliefs and values about healthy and safe food. We appreciate the willingness of our government partners to collaborate with researchers and recognize the time, energy and resources required to develop respectful, trusting relationships with Indigenous community partners to effectively work together on dietary message initiatives.

This study makes an original contribution to research on public health communication about country and store-bought foods in the ISR by describing the nature of dietary messages developed and disseminated in/for the region, and how and by whom

they are disseminated. Our findings have informed the development of an ISR survey to evaluate the effectiveness of existing dietary messages as part of the ongoing CFGH project. Our government partners are also well-poised to integrate study recommendations to inform territorial and regional public health representatives and further improve dietary messaging for/in the ISR (see Table 2). Overall, this study contributes valuable insights, which support improved dietary messaging in the ISR and in other regions of the NWT through more participatory, culture-centered processes.

Table 2: Summary of recommendations for improved dietary messaging in the ISR and NWT

Recommendation	Target audience
1. Strengthen collaborations among territorial, regional and local public health dietary message disseminators, environmental monitoring and health researchers/professionals, local leadership and Inuvialuit country food knowledge holders to create culturally meaningful dietary messages grounded in Inuvialuit culture, knowledge and diets	All dietary message stakeholders in the NWT and ISR
2. Improve frequency of communication among dietary message stakeholders at all scales	All dietary message stakeholders in the NWT and ISR
3. Improve access to scientific information about the health risks and benefits of country and store-bought food choices and processes for local and regional health professionals, allied health professionals and cooking/nutrition program coordinators in the ISR	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region
4. Create ISR-specific messages promoting the nutritional, cultural, spiritual and mental health benefits of harvesting, preparing and consuming country foods, rooted in Inuvialuit worldviews of food	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region, IRC; researchers; local dietary message disseminators
5. Support Inuvialuit participation in dietary message development and dissemination, especially Elders	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region, IRC; local dietary message disseminators
6. Create ISR-specific recipes and nutrition/cooking program curricula, designed by Inuvialuit	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region; local dietary message disseminators; local country food knowledge holders
7. Collaboratively review messages with Inuvialuit country food knowledge holders and local public health dietary message disseminators to improve consistency, trustworthiness, and cultural relevancy	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region; IRC; academic researchers
8. Improve current methods of dietary message communication in the ISR by using preferred methods (e.g., social media and in person via cooking and on-the-land programs) and forming active collaborations among environmental monitors and health researchers and professionals to co-present country food contaminant messaging	GNWT HSS; NTHSSA Beaufort-Delta Region; researchers; local dietary message disseminators; local leadership

9. Fund and support evaluation projects to understand the effectiveness of dietary messages communicated in the ISR and the impact of messages on dietary behaviours in the ISR for both country and store-bought food	GNWT HSS; IRC; academic researchers

Conclusion

This participatory study characterized how public health dietary messages addressing the health and safety of country and store-bought food in the ISR are developed and disseminated, based on data from interviews with territorial, regional and local dietary message disseminators in the NWT. We provide novel insights about the types of messages currently being communicated, which relate primarily to healthy store-bought food choices, nutritional aspects of store-bought and country foods, and safety risks of consuming country foods. Dietary messages currently disseminated publicly in the ISR are developed at all scales and communicated by a range of sources, including: territorial and regional health professionals, territorial and regional health representatives, regional and local food program coordinators, academic researchers, country food knowledge holders, and local leadership. Messages are shared using a variety of in-person, written, audio and online methods.

A noteworthy gap is the lack of locally tailored, culturally relevant dietary messaging developed and communicated by Inuvialuit. We recommend evaluating dietary messages in the ISR and further improving collaborations among Inuvialuit knowledge holders and dietary message developers at all scales. This can help to foster more culturally relevant messaging in the ISR and NWT, with the goal of supporting Inuvialuit food sovereignty through participatory, culture-centered processes. Lessons learned here may also be applicable to other Indigenous contexts across the North.

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Appendix: Key informant interview guides

Interviews with government representatives:

1. What is your role at [the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation/ GNWT HSS]?
   a. Are you involved in the development and/or communication of health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods for the ISR? If yes, what is your involvement?
2. What can you tell me about how health messages are developed?
3. What can you tell me about how health messages are communicated?
   a. What are the current dissemination tools that are being used?
   Are there specific target groups that receive advice regarding diet? If so, please
   b. describe the type of advice provided to specific target groups. Is there other advice that you are also providing to the general population?
   c. Is there an evaluation method that is being used to determine how the messages are being received? If so, what evaluation method is being used?
4. What are some barriers and facilitators to the current dissemination tools that are being used?
5. Have you had the opportunity to speak to communities about health messages?
   a. If so, what barriers and facilitators of the dissemination tools did you hear about?
6. Do you know of other agencies or places that release health messages besides the IRC and GNWT HSS?
   a. If so, who are they and do you communicate with these other agencies?
7. Is there anything else about health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods that you would like to share?

Interviews with public health professionals:

1. What is your role in delivering healthcare services?
   a. Are you involved in the development and/or communication of health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods for the ISR? If yes, what is your involvement?
2. What can you tell me about how health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods are communicated to patients?
   a. What are the current dissemination tools that are being used?
   b. Are there specific target groups that receive advice regarding diet? If so, please describe the type of advice provided to specific target groups.
   c. What are some barriers and facilitators to the current tools that are being used?
   d. Is there an evaluation method that is being used to determine how the messages are being received? If so, what evaluation method is being used?
3. Is there anything else about health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods that you would like to share?

Interviews with community health representatives:

1. How would you describe the _____ program?
   a. What is your role in delivering this program?
   b. Are you involved in the development and/or communication of health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods for the ISR? If yes, what is your involvement?

c. If yes, how are they developed?

2. What can you tell me about how health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods are communicated to participants?
   a. What methods do you currently use to communicate these messages to participants?
   b. Are there specific target groups that receive advice regarding diet? If so, please describe the type of advice provided to specific target groups.
      i. Do you provide advice to people with diabetes? If so, what kind of advice do you give to them?
   c. Because we don't have nutritional labels on country foods like we do on store-bought foods, do you provide nutritional facts to participants about country foods?
   d. What ways seem to work best when talking with people about healthy foods?
   e. What doesn't seem to work well when talking with people about healthy foods?

3. Is there a method that you use to find out how your messages are being received by your participants? If so, what method do you use?
4. Do you know of other people or programs that communicate health messages in your community?
   a. If so, who are they and do you communicate with these other people or programs?
5. Is there anything else about health messages related to country foods and store-bought foods that you would like to share?

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Original Research Article

Band-aid solutions: Small business owners' perspectives on a sugar-sweetened beverage tax in Manitoba

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores perceptions of sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) taxation among small business owners/managers (n=7) in Manitoba, Canada through thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. Most participants believed the tax would be ineffective; they predicted the majority of customers would continue consuming SSB. Main concerns about the tax's effectiveness were that it fails to address root causes of high sugar consumption and is easy for many consumers to ignore. Participants called for the government to focus on other community issues, citing changes to the healthcare system and financially assisting vulnerable community members as more pressing matters than SSB consumption.

Keywords: Sugar-sweetened beverages; taxation; small business; Manitoba; health policy

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Résumé

Cette étude qualitative explore les perceptions de propriétaires et gestionnaires de petites entreprises (n=7) du Manitoba, au Canada, concernant la taxe sur les boissons édulcorées au sucre. Des entrevues semi-structurées ont été menées, lesquelles font l'objet d'une analyse thématique. La plupart des participants estimaient que la taxe serait inefficace; ils ont prédit que la majorité de la clientèle continuerait à boire les produits en question. Les principales préoccupations à propos de l'efficacité de cette taxe étaient qu'elle ne s'attaque pas aux causes de la consommation élevée de sucre et qu'elle risque d'être ignorée par les consommateurs. Les participants ont invité le gouvernement à se concentrer sur d'autres questions sociales : les changements à apporter au système de soins de santé et le soutien financier aux personnes vulnérables, notamment, étaient considérés comme des enjeux plus urgents que la consommation de boissons sucrées.

Introduction

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) have been singled out as one of the leading sources of excess sugar consumption, most notably in low-income and racialized communities for which SSB are both affordable and accessible (Mullie et al., 2011; Block, 2004). In Canada, Indigenous peoples, which include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, comprise a disproportionate part of populations marginalized by class, race, and colonialism. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended the use of excise taxation to reduce SSB consumption and the associated prevalence of obesity, Type 2 Diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and non-communicable diseases in both children and adults (World Health Organization [WHO], 2015). In the past ten years, SSB taxation has gained traction in North America, where a SSB tax has been implemented in Mexico, multiple counties in the United States, and many other countries globally (World Cancer Research Fund International, 2018). In 2014, Canada reported the fourteenth highest SSB sales out of fifty-four countries (Popkin & Hawkes, 2016). The high reported sales and intake of SSB have led several jurisdictions in Canada to consider implementing a SSB tax. For small business owners, operationalizing a SSB tax puts them between a government intent on addressing health issues through taxation, and the need to realize profits from the vulnerable communities they serve. Small businesses that continue to sell SSBs wade into the political quagmire of who is responsible for curbing consumption by virtue of wanting to stay in business to serve those same communities.

Small food retailers greatly influence the food environments of the communities they serve, including dietary habits related to SSB consumption. Like fast-food companies accused of putting profits ahead of health, small food retailers must consider profitability of commodities to stay in business. This is especially true for low-income neighbourhoods and/or communities with a substantial racialized population, as small food retailers (including convenience or corner stores) are noted for their density in these areas (Morland et al., 2002; Cannuscio et al., 2010). In this regard, a study by

Sharkey and colleagues (2013) found that the presence of convenience stores directly influenced what food and beverages were available to fifty Mexican-background families living in Texas. Furthermore, households in which a child purchased food and/or beverages from a convenience store at least once a week consumed higher levels of total energy, total fat, and saturated fat than households where children did not purchase food and/or beverages at least once a week (Sharkey et al., 2013). Visiting corner stores on the way to and from school can be viewed as a common daily ritual, in which children would often purchase chips and pop for less than a dollar during both visits (Cannuscio et al., 2010). The authors state that these rituals lead to a significant portion of the income of poverty-bound communities to be spent at corner stores in exchange for food and beverages that contribute to poor diet quality and health (Cannuscio et al., 2010). In Canada, though the research is limited, First Nations people, on- and off-reserve, and other Indigenous persons tend to live in areas with lower access to full-service grocery stores and higher concentration of corner stores (Kenny et al., 2020).

Importantly, most convenience or corner stores are independently owned, including those affiliated with a franchise (The Food Trust, 2022). The economic challenges facing small, independently owned businesses are well-documented (Gill & Biger, 2012; Chandler, 2012), and have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020). In the United States, small businesses owned by women, African American, Latinx, and Asian persons were disproportionately impacted negatively during COVID-19 in terms of business activity (Fairlie, 2020). Notably, compared to Canadian-born individuals, immigrants are more likely to own small businesses, particularly in the food services sector (Momani, 2016). Momani also estimates that approximately 35 percent of immigrant business owners reported facing discrimination in business, which they attributed to their immigrant status. Furthermore, interviews with entrepreneurs revealed considerable criticism of policies in Canada that favour larger corporations over smaller businesses (Momani, 2016).

The WHO reports that detrimental effects of a SSB tax on small businesses are a "myth," though no evidence behind this claim is provided (WHO, 2015). In a survey asking Seattle citizens about the economic impacts of the SSB tax, the majority of respondents also did not believe the tax would negatively affect small businesses (Oddo et al., 2019). Despite statements by the WHO and beliefs of the general public, SSB sales are a major source of income for many small businesses. SSBs were the most commonly purchased item in a study investigating food and beverage purchases from 105 small food retailers in Minneapolis and St. Paul by Caspi and colleagues (2017), and 46 percent of participants purchased at least one SSB during their trip. For instance, a 2012 ban on SSB larger than 16 ounces in New York City's restaurants, delis, sports arenas, movie theatres, and food carts was also overturned in part due to criticism about the harm caused to small businesses (Quelch & Boudreau, 2016).

Cross-shopping is an unintentional consequence of SSB taxes that are only implemented at a local-level, in which individuals can cross jurisdictions to purchase SSB without the tax (Baskin & Coary, 2019; Cawley & Frisvold, 2016). Cross-shopping may violate the otherwise high level of loyalty and preference for convenient locations demonstrated by customers of small food retailers (Caspi et al., 2017). This was observed after the implementation of the SSB tax in Philadelphia county and Berkeley, in which sales significantly decreased for stores inside Philadelphia county (Baskin & Coary, 2019) and Berkeley (Cawley & Frisvold, 2016), whereas stores outside these regions saw a gain in revenue. A Berkeley retailer near a border reported, "I'm on the border...a lot of my clients leave

the merchandise on the counter and just go" (Falbe et al., 2020, p.1435).

Berkeley storeowners chose to respond to cross-shopping by passing less of the tax onto consumers, raising SSB prices by less than half of the predicted increases (Cawley & Frisvold, 2016). This type of response from small business owners may make a SSB tax ineffective in discouraging SSB consumption, as well as contributing to their own financial losses or by impacting changes in other food or beverage prices not yet captured by any data. Furthermore, implementing an item-specific tax naturally results in additional work, which smaller retailers are less able to absorb. Indeed, an examination of the perspectives of small retailers located in Berkeley regarding the implementation of an SSB tax indicated that distributors and retailers "had tons of questions," reported the implementation as "just more work" and "time-consuming," and there was considerable confusion as to which beverages were included in the taxation (Falbe et al., 2020).

The potential for cross-shopping in pursuit of lower prices is not new, and tax schemes can and have been able to account for geographic oddities, such as in the city of Lloydminster, which straddles the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Alberta has never enacted a provincial sales tax, whereas Saskatchewan's rate is currently at 6 percent on most goods and services. This unique city is the simplest example of cross-shopping complications. Store owners on the Saskatchewan side of town long complained that they were disadvantaged, since customers could simply cross the street to enter the tax-free zone of Alberta. In order to compete, Saskatchewan store owners either (illegally) refused to collect sales tax, or alternatively, paid the tax out of their profits (Beamish, 1965). This conflict was overcome by adopting a city-wide zero tax, regardless of which side of town a business was located. This was likely a more politically acceptable solution than adding a similar tax on the Alberta side. Such a solution, of course, negates or at least diminishes the potential to raise SSB tax revenues in centres bordering jurisdictions.

In Canada, a further jurisdictional consideration adds to the complexity of imposing a local excise tax. Since its enactment in 1876, the *Indian Act* has accorded an exemption from all forms of taxation to "status Indians" on a Reserve. This provision supersedes all other tax regimes, both federally and provincially. Thus, cross-shopping takes on a different dynamic for those who, by virtue of proximity to a Reserve and legal status under the *Indian Act*, may access a "tax-free zone" in which to make their SSB purchases. Furthermore, the prevalence of "urban reserves," which are specially designated zones located in existing cities or towns where *Indian Act* tax exemptions apply, are a growing phenomenon. Although this trend is in response to the need and desire for greater economic participation by First Nations peoples in the mainstream economy, it consequently provides an increased opportunity to avoid a SSB tax for certain First Nations Peoples.

Study purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of a SSB tax among small business owners and managers in Manitoba neighbourhoods of varying incomes, including rural Manitoba. Specifically, we explored how small businesses perceive they will be affected by a SSB tax, as well as what behaviour changes small business owners anticipate among their customers in response to a SSB tax. This study also asks participants what they feel are acceptable strategies for use of SSB tax revenue should a tax be implemented, as well as what their recommendations are for health interventions that effectively target SSB consumption. In doing so, this study seeks to fill gaps in research about how the SSB tax will affect Canadian target populations who closely interact with small businesses that are retailers of SSB, as

well as the acceptability of the SSB tax among small businesses that have the potential to be affected by this policy.

Materials and methods

Design

We used a community-based participatory approach including a qualitative design. This study is part of a larger study to examine the acceptability and utility of a SSB tax among Indigenous populations. In this paper, the term "Indigenous" is used to refer to both "status Indians", as defined by Canada's *Indian Act* but more properly referred to as First Nations persons, persons of First Nation ancestry including those not recognized by the *Indian Act* (i.e., Inuit, and Métis persons). The study was completed in partnership with the National Indigenous Diabetes Association and Fearless R2W, and was informed by the seventh author's framework for policy evaluation. This unpublished framework includes considering equally the perspectives of four stakeholders: labour, business, government, and non-governmental organizations. This holistic framework understands that all elements of society are interconnected and that economic development in marginalized communities is a critical component of empowerment and, ultimately, health and wellness. The University of Manitoba Health Research Ethics Board approved this study (HS21878 H2018:234).

Setting

Interviews were conducted among small food retail owners/managers in Manitoba. In this context, "small business" refers to those businesses with fewer than 100 full-time employees or annual revenues under $15 million (Government of Manitoba, 2022). In Manitoba, small businesses receive tax incentives, including a threshold that was raised in 2018, to $500,000 (Signorelli, 2018), providing a tax rate of 9 percent for this first bracket, compared to a rate of 27 percent for active income over the $500,000 threshold. Like other Canadian provinces, small businesses in Manitoba make up roughly 97-98 percent of all business enterprises (Government of Canada, 2020b).

We purposively sampled individuals/businesses from the lower-income North End neighbourhood of the city of Winnipeg, middle- to high-income areas of Winnipeg, and the northern city of Flin Flon, Manitoba. Businesses/participants selected in middle- to high-income areas in Winnipeg included River Heights, St. Vital, and Fort Garry, which have median household incomes of $56,848, $63,922, and $68,021, respectively (Cui et al., 2019). Winnipeg's North End has the largest and highest per capita urban Indigenous population among Canada's provinces; notably, this area is considered a "food desert" (Manitoba Collaborative Data Portal [MCDP], 2020), defined as an area in which healthy, affordable, fresh food is scarce. Compared to other Winnipeg neighbourhoods, Point Douglas, which includes the North End, has the highest unemployment rate, highest proportion of lone

parent families, and has the lowest median household income of $44,437 (Cui et al., 2019).

Flin Flon, Manitoba is a northern mining city located on the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border, approximately 800 km north-west of Winnipeg. Flin Flon is within close proximity to many First Nation communities, the closest being about twenty-five km from Flin Flon. The total population of Flin Flon is 4,982, of which 21 percent identify as Indigenous, with a median household income of $64,256 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Recruitment

Research assistants approached small business owners/managers in person who met our inclusion criteria and sampling strategy. The inclusion criteria included: able to speak English, self-identify as store owner or manager, and being over the age of eighteen years. In terms of food retail, our recruitment was limited to small independently owned grocery stores, convenience stores, or corner stores. Small grocery stores are defined as a retail food establishment with at least half of its floor area allocated to food products requiring home preparation. Convenience stores, as described by Xin et al. (2021), are small retailers that stock everyday products, charge higher prices compared to grocery stores, serve more locations, have longer business hours, and tend to sell fast food, sugary drinks, and other take-away snack foods. Convenience stores tend to serve occasional needs of residents living nearby as a "convenient" supplement to larger stores (Xin et al., 2021).

Participants received an honorarium for their time in participating. One participant was included here who responded to recruitment for a different arm of the study for the general public; however, their interview is included here, as they identified as a manager of a small business selling SSB and their occupation informed their opinions. As such, the interviewer (NR) utilized the interview guide for small business early in the interview process. However, the business was a bar. All interviews were conducted between May-August 2019 and all participants provided their written, individual, informed consent.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, audio recorded interviews were conducted in person by trained research assistants (KM, KB) and the Principal Investigator (NR). The semi-structured interview guide included questions about the stores' SSB products sold, opinion on SSB tax implementation, target populations of the SSB tax, speculations about changes in SSB purchasing patterns if a SSB tax were implemented, and views on where potential SSB tax revenues would go. During interviews, the interviewer noted any nonverbal communication such as gestures and other body language cues. Immediately after the interviews were completed the research assistant recorded detailed field notes, which included nonverbal communication, setting of location, and any other important information that may have not been captured on the audio recorder. The average interview length was approximately twenty-four minutes.

Analysis

Interview transcriptions and field notes underwent a multistage form of thematic analysis in NVivo 12 to identify emerging themes. Interviews were read repeatedly and answers to research questions were summarized for each individual research participant. Then, interviews underwent line-by-line coding using both inductive in-vivo and deductive techniques (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Saldaña, 2016).

Initially, transcripts were annotated by identifying key phrases used by participants (in vivo coding) (Saldaña, 2016). Then, common recurring phrases and concepts were identified as important meaning units, "codes." These inductively derived codes were added to important concepts from the existing empirical and theoretical literature to form a global code-list. The code list evolved as analysis proceeded and further recurring concepts were introduced. Each line of transcript was read and assigned to the code(s) comprising the code-list. Following line-by-line coding, these codes were grouped into more expansive, overarching, linked meaning-units (categories), then larger categories, and ultimately, conceptual themes. Lastly, any systematic patterns in themes or responses to research questions between types of stores or participants were assessed to determine overall attitudes toward the SSB tax among participants from the same communities.

Results

Participants

A total of seven business owners/managers were interviewed, including five males and two females. Of the seven businesses, five were located in Winnipeg, two of which were located in the North End, and two in Flin Flon. The businesses included small grocery stores, convenience stores, and one bar. The participants level of education ranged from completion of a university degree (n= 4), completion of trade/technical school or college diploma (n=1), and completion of secondary school (n=2). Four participants identified as white, one each as Arab and East Indian, and one as multi-racial.

Themes

Five participants said they were against the SSB tax, while two participants vocalized their support for the tax. Two overarching themes emerged: "concerns about effectiveness" and "the need for other reforms," each with branching subthemes. The themes are discussed below with illustrative quotes.

Concerns about effectiveness

Although two participants were in clear support of the SSB tax, every single participant voiced concerns they felt would hinder the SSB tax from achieving its goal of reducing SSB consumption. Subthemes captured by the general theme "concerns about effectiveness" include: "consumer adaptation to the tax," "normalization of sugar," "competition, and the ineffectiveness of the tobacco tax."

Consumer adaptation to the tax

The majority of participants believed that the SSB tax would have no impact on the purchasing patterns of SSB among their clientele. These participants predicted that after the introduction of the SSB tax, customers would eventually become used to the price increase on

SSB and continue to factor it into their grocery budget. Consequentially, most participants anticipated that there may be an initial loss in sales, but the SSB tax would not affect their profits in the long run. Additionally, participants discussed the purchasing patterns of customers that consume high volumes of SSB. Participant 4 interpreted choices made by their customers as prioritizing the purchase of SSB over healthier goods, and also mentions customer's financial constraints:

> We move a lot of product. You find that at your local stores, the small convenience stores, smaller stores. You find out what people actually buy. And a lot of times it is, they buy themselves some sugar, but they buy themselves one thing that's healthy. Or they do come in here and buy some meat products, they buy some spaghetti, bread, and turn around you'll see two, two litres of pop with them every time. Every time somebody comes in and say, "Oh, man. I can't afford this." They'll put the bread back and get a two litre of Coke, or Pepsi. I'm just like, "The bread's more important. You need it to eat." Or they'll get a smaller milk because they want that two litre of sugar.

Another purchasing pattern for consumers who purchased high volumes of SSB was the habit of purchasing SSB once a day. Although some participants foresaw the SSB tax slightly reducing SSB purchases for average or low consumers of SSB, the majority of participants felt that the small price increase would not be enough to deter high consumers of SSB. Some participants also discussed substitution effects, or the alternative "choices," that could arise from customers looking to find ways around the SSB tax. This could be in the form of purchasing cheaper SSBs, combining sugary drink mixes or plain sugar with water (which can be stretched to produce a greater volume), or purchasing different sugary products like chocolate or confectionary in place of SSB.

Normalization of sugar

Many participants felt the SSB tax would not address the root causes of sugar overconsumption. Participants discussed how the normalization of sugar in society makes it very difficult to reduce sugar consumption, especially with regards to environments and social contexts in which sugar overconsumption is encouraged, such as family gatherings or parties. Participants also said environments and events where SSB are commonly served are a major driver for their SSB sales. Some participants pointed at mixing alcohol with SSB as a dietary norm that greatly increases one's sugar consumption; Participant 6, who worked at a bar, especially brought this point to attention. Participant 4 discussed how alcohol, the contexts in which SSB is served, and the normalization of SSB at large all intertwine to perpetuate SSB consumption in high consumers of SSB:

> "They are ruined.... They come back anyway. They still do. When you look at sugar as an intake to go.... Even if they did, like I said, in the future get rid of sugar, made it illegal, and even if the Coke went up a dollar to three dollars today, people would still come in and buy that product. Because we need it, and why? Because they invented rye. And rye and Coke, well, people like rye and coke, right? That's always the thing. And they go, 'Okay, well you need that.' Therefore, they will always buy it."

As is also discussed by Participant 4 in this illustrative quote, many participants describe the normalization of SSB and sugar as fuelled by what they perceived to be addictions to sugar. Another reason participants said the normalization of sugar would render the SSB tax ineffective is that the tax only targets SSB and not the sugar content of other foods, which participants posited contribute to sugar addictions. Moreover, these addictions to sugar were described as difficult to overcome for lower-income customers,

because foods and beverages high in sugar were more accessible and affordable than healthier options. Some participants noted that the stock of foods and beverages in their own businesses were quite unhealthy, and that the majority of products contained excess and artificial sugar, which would also perpetuate sugar consumption.

Competition

Participants had diverging opinions about the potential market competition that could arise due to SSB taxation. Some participants stated that the SSB tax would not affect big corporations and small businesses equally. One reason that participants discussed was that SSB sales contribute to a much greater proportion of profit for small businesses than they do for big corporations. Participant 2 discussed how big corporations are advantaged due to the diverse range of goods that they carry:

> A lot of small businesses actually look at their numbers and look at the…you know the price of things, the increases and how it affects the day-to-day sales. Where a lot of the big corporations…it's just another thing on the shelf, it's…they're so large that they have so many main streams of income coming in and it doesn't really concern them where it's a ten cents, fifteen cents increase. Whereas a small business…maybe soda pop or soda drinks are their main selling items…where now the prices increased, you know they can't sell it as much as you know Safeway would sell it, or you know…. Walmart. They just—they can lose money on selling that soda product just to bring people in and buy other things. Whereas small businesses can't really do that so.

One participant also discussed how corporations would make deals with SSB suppliers to offset losses caused by the SSB tax, but that SSB suppliers would not extend these deals to local, non-franchise small businesses. Contrarily, another participant said that their small business would receive the same deals from SSB suppliers as big corporations; worth noting is that this participant owns a convenience store that is part of a large franchise. Other participants disagreed that big corporations would have advantages over small businesses, because they stated that each store would be expected to implement the same SSB tax regardless of its size, and so they felt the SSB tax would affect each type of business equally.

With regards to competition caused by cross-shopping effects, the two participants from the Manitoba border town of Flin Flon (Participants 1 and 5) had contrasting opinions on whether cross-shopping would harm their business. Participant 1 said that cross-shopping effects would have severe effects on their business, based on experiences with white community members who go to First Nation reserves to purchase untaxed tobacco. On the other hand, Participant 5 felt that cross-shopping would not occur among their customers, as the cost of gas driving to a store at a further location would outweigh the money saved on SSB. Several participants who were not from the border town also commented that because many of their customers shopped at their stores due to convenience of location, they would not lose these customers to other stores that were farther away.

Ineffectiveness of the tobacco tax

Many participants discussed experiences with Manitoba's tobacco tax and how the outcomes of the tobacco tax could most likely be used to predict the outcomes of the SSB tax. Most participants felt that the tobacco tax was not successful in deterring consumers from smoking. Despite the tobacco tax causing more drastic price increases than the SSB tax potentially would, participants noted how many of their consumers still continue to purchase tobacco. This is demonstrated by Participant 5, who comments, "Cause personally yeah, I like to have…sugar in my tea or my

Pepsi cola. I don't care if the price goes up, I'll still be paying for it. It's no different than tobacco. There's people that say if it goes up to twenty dollars a pack, I'm going to quit, but I still sell tobacco."

Participants who discussed the ineffectiveness of the tobacco tax described the tobacco tax as a model for how the SSB tax would be received by target populations. Moreover, some participants discussed how the majority of their customers purchase SSB and other sugary products. They stated a simple price increase would not be enough to discourage customers from purchasing an item that they continue to enjoy, which is similar to the reason that they perceived the tobacco tax did not effectively discourage avid smokers from purchasing tobacco, namely because of addiction.

Need for other reforms

The need for other reforms that differed from the SSB tax arose among participants when discussing what recommendations, they had for targeting SSB consumption. Two subthemes emerged: "alternative health interventions" and "helping vulnerable community members."

Alternative health interventions

Participants had ideas for alternative health interventions or modifications to the SSB tax. A recurring idea among participants was reformulating SSB with natural sugar, as well as reducing the amount of sugar in SSB. Participant 1 discusses their opinions on how reformulation would be more effective than implementing the SSB tax:

> I think if they truly, truly cared about obesity, they wouldn't [implement a tax on SSB]. The people that they are taxing is the working class and the poor and that's who always gets the tight squeeze. We pay enough tax on everything else. If they truly were concerned about it, they would make a deal with the manufacturers. They bailed out banks, they bailed out car companies, they've given, uhh, subsidies to farmers. Why don't they get with the corporations, sit down with the solution? Maybe Coke doesn't need to have their classic Coke anymore with ten tablespoons of sugar. Maybe their Coke zero, if it's a healthy sugar, maybe that should be their top brand. Maybe the government, government needs to set limits with the corporations of how much sugar is allowed in drinks, start there.... Their solution is always tax the people, tax the people, tax the people. That's not a solution, that's a Band-Aid, it's a Band-Aid.

Similar ideas for alternate health interventions reflected a shifting of responsibility for one's dietary "choices" from individual consumers to corporations and the government. Participants felt most consumers would purchase SSB regardless of price and that it would be more effective to reduce sugar consumption by making healthier versions of SSB more accessible. Other recommendations also reflected a more holistic approach to reducing SSB consumption, such as increased nutritional education and reducing SSB taxation for types of SSB that have some nutritional value, such as milk or juice.

Helping vulnerable community members

When asked where they thought SSB tax revenue should be directed, most participants expressed frustration with how the government has handled revenue from previous taxes. Some participants said they had little understanding of how the funds are used to help their own communities, and expressed frustration that taxes seem to be implemented as a money grab. A suggested area for revenue to go included assisting vulnerable community members, as Participant 2 discusses:

> I think the government should use this money for communities that actually need it... you know when you see like the homeless people ... to make shelters for them so they can actually go there...and you know

> stay for free, create jobs for them to do...maybe better education...instead of you know using tax peoples' money for uh welfare or for building streets uh repairing the streets. Use it for...you know making people better and offering better things people actually want to you know...get up and do something instead of just sitting there and taking a nap.

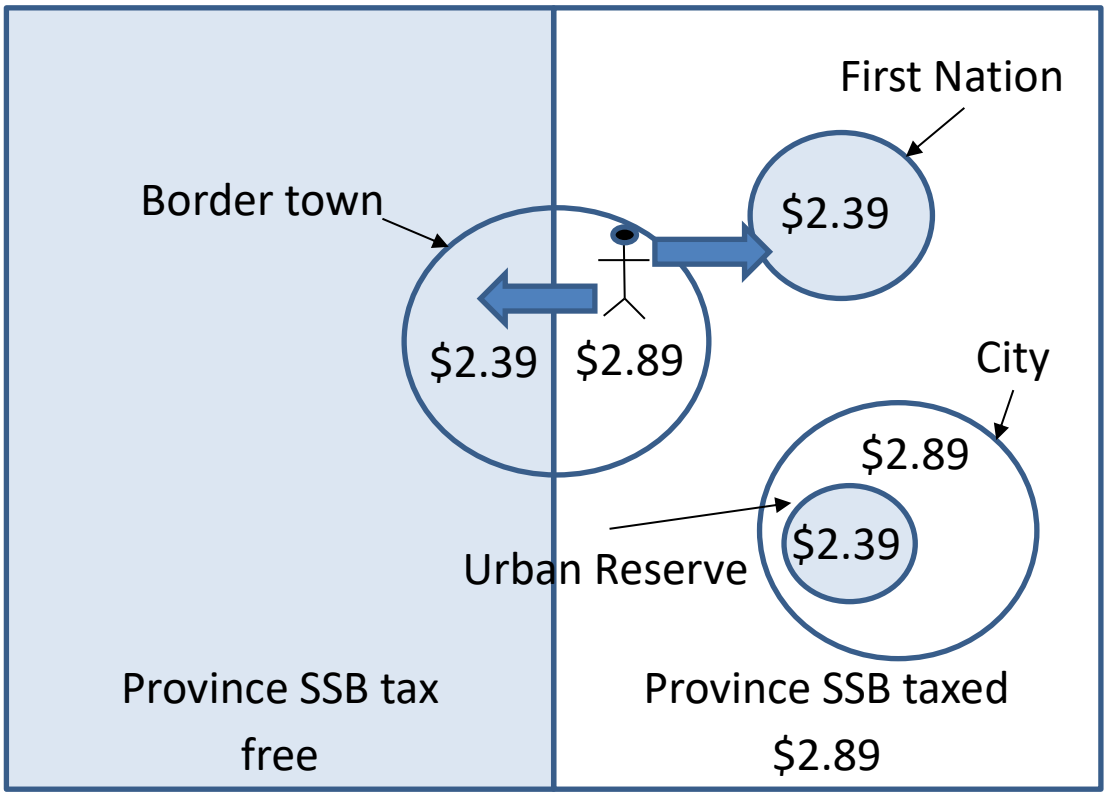
Other participants also suggested revenues go towards populations or areas in need in their communities, with some participants feeling that SSB consumption was much less of an urgent matter in their communities. Additionally, participants desired revenue to go toward changes to Manitoba's healthcare system and improve access. Overall, participants expressed a preference for tax revenue and policy making to focus on strengthening their communities

Discussion

In our qualitative study, many participants stated that they were against the implementation of a SSB tax in Canada. Their reasons for opposition were predominantly due to their belief in the ineffectiveness of the tax, as opposed to potential economic harm to their small businesses. Some participants predicted that after facing an initial loss in sales in response to a SSB tax, their sales would revert back to their original levels given enough time and there would ultimately be no long-term effect on profits.

When asked whether cross-shopping or competition with big-box stores would harm their small businesses, most participants predicted that these forms of competition would only be slight inconveniences. The majority of participants were located far enough from a provincial border, which would render cross-shopping unfeasible, should a SSB tax be implemented at the provincial level. Likewise, Le Bodo and colleagues (2016) suggest the feasibility of cross-shopping in Canada to the U.S. would also be fairly limited, though many Canadian citizens live within one to three hours driving distance of U.S. border towns, including in Manitoba. Nonetheless, areas at provincial borders, such as the Ottawa-Gatineau area at the Ontario-Quebec border, may be susceptible to cross-shopping in the case of a provincial tax (Le Bodo et al., 2016). Indeed, the implementation of an SSB tax in Philadelphia county resulted in cross-shopping effects that caused massive losses in profit for food retailers in the county where the SSB tax was in effect (Baskin & Coary, 2019). Participant 1, who owns a business in a Manitoba border town, made note of their vulnerability given their close proximity to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border and called for the implementation of the tax at the federal level. **Figure 1** illustrates the likely challenges of a provincial SSB excise tax.

Figure 1: Schematic of tax-free zones and potential for consumers to leave a taxed jurisdiction to access tax-free sugar-sweetened beverages in nearby locations (e.g. border town and First Nation).



Beverage prices referenced include a hypothetical 20% excise tax for one sugar-sweetened beverage product.
SSB, sugar-sweetened beverage

Cross-shopping becomes an important consideration in communities that are either First Nations reserves (as defined by the *Indian Act*), or for those in close proximity to a rural or urban reserve. In Canada, each level of government has constitutionally defined areas of what can be taxed and who ultimately can bear the added cost of a tax, with the additional proviso that status "Indians" (First Nations Persons) cannot be taxed by any means for purchases made on a reserve, as outlined in the *Indian Act*. Further, First Nations have limited legislative capacity to collect any taxes, including SSB taxes, and even less means to determine how federal or provincial tax revenues might be invested in their communities.

In Winnipeg, as partial settlement of a long outstanding land claim dating back to 1871, the Federal Government negotiated the sale of land located within the city of Winnipeg to the successful claimant Nations of Treaty 1 (now organized as a Treaty One Development Corporation). Plans are to develop this parcel to include mixed-use residents, including retail merchants, and when complete, will form the largest urban reserve in Canada. This designation as a "reserve" allows for the application of tax exemption provisions under the *Indian Act*, making tax-exempt purchases available to all status First Nations People on all products and services purchased at this location. This designation makes an urban reserve an economically attractive location for retail sales. Thus, the creation of a SSB tax-free zone in a major city, while delivering major economic benefit to its First Nations owners, may not reduce SSB consumption by First Nations peoples

living both on- and off-reserve (but in the city), and may even encourage greater purchasing to avoid higher prices elsewhere in Winnipeg. The implications on the retail prices of SSB in various tax-free zones is, again, illustrated in Figure 1. From a health perspective, this is critical as First Nations are the very group whose health is most at risk from overconsumption of SSB given higher prevalence of Type 2 Diabetes.

On the other hand, as referenced by Participant 1, SSB tax-free zones may contribute to non-Indigenous people illegally accessing tax-free SSB products and having First Nations unfairly blamed for non-Indigenous access to tax-free products of public health concern. This may further contribute to racial tensions among small business owners, reported here, and which ultimately undermine public health (Reid et al., 2019), and do not address inequalities between small business and large corporations.

With regards to competition from larger stores, participants noted that the biggest draw of customers to their store was convenience of location, and that consumers looking to save money on SSB would end up spending more money on transportation. Customers who frequented small business food retailers cite ease of accessibility compared to supermarkets as a reason for customer loyalty, as demonstrated by studies of small businesses in low-income communities in Philadelphia (Cannuscio et al., 2010), Hidalgo County, Texas (Sharkey et al., 2013) and Berkeley (Caspi et al., 2017). Participant 1 also noted another area of vulnerability was how their small business would likely not receive discounts from suppliers of SSB. Conversely, Participant 2 explained that they would most likely receive deals from SSB suppliers aiming to offset losses caused by the SSB tax, as their small business was part of a franchise. Interviews with small food retailer owners in four American cities (Baltimore, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Durham, and San Diego) reveal that one of the driving factors for small businesses to stock and sell large volumes of SSB is their relationships with food suppliers (Gittelsohn et al., 2018). Similarly, for small business owners like Participant 2, monetary incentives, and the need to maintain store/vendor relationships with SSB suppliers may be reasons for these owners to not worry about the economic effects of the SSB tax.

All participants, whether or not they supported the tax, listed a variety of factors that could hinder the effectiveness of the tax if it were to be implemented in their community's current socioeconomic environment. Key factors hindering the effectiveness of the tax across different demographics were income levels and SSB consumption, for which some participants noted an inverse relationship. Families and individuals of lower income levels were perceived as prone to consuming much more SSB than customers of high incomes. Participants observed that due to budgets, lower-income customers were also more likely to purchase SSB, as opposed to other, more expensive dietary staples like bread and milk. An examination of the differences between small and non-traditional food retailers revealed that stores located in census tracts with a high proportion of persons of colour had less access to fresh produce, although stores in communities with predominantly white populations saw greater availability of impulse-based (i.e., located near the register) unhealthy items (Winkler et al., 2019).

Fewer than one in five Canadians live in rural areas and Canadian rural citizens have poorer diet qualities than urban-residing Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2011; DesMeules et al., 2006). However, there is a lack of rural retail food environment research that can point to the poorer diet qualities being caused by the inaccessibility of healthy options (Minaker et al., 2016). Furthermore, rural populations are heterogenous, but are disproportionately comprised of Indigenous populations (both First Nations on-reserve and off-

reserve) and farming communities, which are disproportionately older (Statistics Canada, 2021; Government of Canada 2020a; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). Data collected from rural and remote First Nations communities living on-reserve suggest that many communities live in food deserts with minimal retail access to fruits and vegetables (Minaker et al., 2016), and are often serviced by a single food retailer, resulting in higher prices partially attributed to less competition (Kenny et al., 2020). These studies are relevant as there are gaps in how the SSB tax may affect groups in different Canadian food environments, as well as how Canadian food environments, and the effects of SSB availability, differ from the U.S. (Minaker et al., 2016).

Participants pointed to Manitoba's tobacco tax as a reference for the outcomes of the SSB tax. For comparison, the added tax to cigarette sales, currently at $0.30 per cigarette/$60 per carton (Government of Manitoba, 2019), is high compared to existing and proposed SSB taxes in non-Canadian jurisdictions, which in the U.S. is US$0.01/oz or US$0.16 for one 16 oz (351 ml) canned drink (Wang et al., 2012). Most participants believed that the tobacco tax was not effective at reducing tobacco consumption; drastic price increases, in their opinion, did not deter their customers from smoking. Another comparison made between outcomes of the tobacco tax and outcomes of a potential SSB tax is that although the tobacco tax may have deterred people who smoked moderately or occasionally, it had no effect on smokers consuming tobacco at a much higher rate. Evidence does support this perception, as higher cigarette consumption is associated with fewer attempts to quit (Vijayaraghavan et al., 2018). Furthermore, several studies also show that in the U.S., Black or African American adults are less likely to quit smoking compared to white/non-Hispanic white adults (King et al., 2004; Lawrence et al., 2003; Trinidad et al., 2005), and lower income adults are less likely to quit than higher income adults (Peretti-Watel et al., 2009). Moreover, a couple of participants noted that the price increase for tobacco caused by excise taxation is more extreme than it would likely be for SSB. Participants who did feel as though the tobacco tax, along with implementing picture deterrents that are used on tobacco packs, was effective at reducing tobacco consumption also predicted that the SSB tax would be an effective health intervention.

A recurring suggestion for an alternative health intervention to the SSB tax among participants was the reformulation of SSB to use less sugar, along with the elimination of corn syrup to target sugar consumption at the source. Indeed, participants called for *all* types of foods and beverages to be reformulated with less sugar, while simultaneously making healthy foods more accessible to low-income populations. If participants' suggestions for reformulation and increased accessibility of healthy foods and beverages were pursued simultaneously, efforts to improve the nutritional value of goods in small business retailers would not be as affected by customer tendencies to purchase "junk foods," as demonstrated by the studies in Baltimore and San Francisco (Kim et al., 2017; McDaniel et al., 2018)

Participants felt the most effective way to enact these reformulations was to pressure corporations and the government to prioritize consumer health. Similar calls for a "cleaner" label occurred in the food industry in the late 2000s, where health-conscious consumers stressed the need for corporations to reduce the levels of artificial ingredients, fat, and sugar (Quelch & Boudreau, 2016). Such demands led to companies like Nestlé to redefine core values of their business, which originally marketed itself as a confectionary company but switched to promoting itself as a wellness company

(Quelch & Boudreau, 2016). However, the rush to appease health-conscious consumers also led to the saturation of the food industry and its marketing materials with terms like "natural," "local," "organic," and "non-GMO," which lack federally mandated definitions (Quelch & Boudreau, 2016). Additionally, the removal of artificial ingredients may also pose no health benefits, such as when Panera removed sodium lactate from its products; this made no difference in the nutritional value of their goods but still allowed for Panera to benefit from the positive press associated with this decision (Quelch & Boudreau, 2016).

Small food retailers can also play an important role in promoting community health and wellbeing, though it should be noted that retailers are not health experts and we caution positioning them as such. In studies of small food retailers in Alaska (Wojcicki & de Schweinitz, 2017) and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Camden, New Jersey (Mayer et al., 2016), store owners reported actively guiding customers in their food choices, particularly children. In Alaska specifically, small food retailers collectively discouraged youth from purchasing energy drinks by advocating against energy drinks to community members and restricting the sale of energy drinks to children (Wojcicki & de Schweinitz, 2017). A study of the Healthy HotSpot initiative in Cook County, Illinois found that customers spoke most positively of the health-promotion work of store owners who lived within the community and shared community demographics such as ethno-cultural identity (Dombrowski & Kelley, 2019). In this regard, it must be noted that in Winnipeg's North End, an Indigenous-owned full-service grocery store closed recently after over twenty-five years in business (Neechi Commons, 2021; Sinclair, 2018). This may highlight the challenges facing small businesses in lower income neighbourhoods, and perhaps particularly businesses serving communities with a high Indigenous population, as observed in the U.S. with small business in majority black neighbourhoods (Perry et al., 2020). An alternate approach may be to consider tax incentives—rather than tax penalties—to encourage "market makeovers" that will create and sustain a community-developed social marketing campaign to create consistent and long-term consumer demand for the heathy foods (Langellier et al., 2013).

A scoping review of the effect of small businesses on public health concludes that in addition to small business owners utilizing their platforms as trusted figures to guide their communities towards healthier diets, they also use their platforms to invest in community development and do so at a significantly higher rate than chain retailers (Schnake-Mahl et al., 2018). Participants in the Mayer et al. (2016) study described helping their communities in various ways, such as communicating with and providing support to customers, as well as making charitable donations to local organizations or residents (Mayer et al., 2016). Moreover, investing in small businesses that in turn contribute economic development increases social capital, creates more opportunities for local jobs, and is associated with lower rates of diabetes and mortality (Schnake-Mahl et al., 2018). Furthermore, small businesses that cultivate an entrepreneurial culture in their communities can also inspire local residents to solve issues and develop a sense of self-determinism (Schnake-Mahl et al., 2018). Given the enthusiasm about promoting community health expressed by many small business owners and managers, whether in this current study or in the several other studies cited previously, involving small business owners who have previous experience in finding solutions to local health challenges is key to developing an effective health intervention for reducing SSB consumption.

When participants were asked where they would like SSB tax revenue to be directed, all participants indicated

broader social issues affecting the health of their communities. A recurring topic was healthcare in Manitoba. Reducing waiting times in Manitoba is an ongoing, documented healthcare issue (Doupe et al., 2017; Canadian Institutes of Health Information [CIHI], 2022). Notably, during the time interviews were conducted, Manitoba was undergoing major healthcare reform due to a political push for austerity (Wilt, 2019). Other issues that participants wanted the government to focus on were assisting vulnerable populations, such as those experiencing homelessness, and individuals receiving social assistance or experiencing addictions. (Wilt, 2019). Indeed, numbers remain high in Manitoba of those experiencing homelessness and addictions, particularly methamphetamine, which correspond with significant health issues (Nickel et al., 2020; Peters & Craig, 2016). Importantly, all these challenges are interconnected and are disproportionately experienced by Indigenous populations in Manitoba, including both in Winnipeg and Flin Flon (Chartier et al., 2020; Katz et al., 2019; Peters & Craig, 2016; Gessler et al., 2011). Canada's inability to systematically and comprehensively address the social determinants of health, despite rhetorical commitment, through effective wealth redistribution schemes, has been recognized (Bryant et al., 2011). Manitoba faces high rates of diabetes, including among children and youth, and a larger population of First Nations residents whose health status as a population has been compromised by the intergenerational traumas of settler colonialism (Katz et al., 2019; Ruth et al., 2020). This has contributed to political tensions in arranging federal transfer payments to Manitoba in order to address these healthcare needs (Collier, 2017).

In conclusion, the majority of participants regard the SSB tax as an ineffective health intervention for reducing SSB consumption. Participants used their daily interactions with members of target groups for the tax, as well as past experiences with tobacco taxation in Manitoba, to predict the outcomes of a potential SSB tax. An overarching criticism of the SSB tax among participants is that it does not address the root causes of excess sugar consumption. By implementing a "Band-Aid" SSB tax to improve health, high consumers of SSB will be punished for their dietary habits while not being provided any assistance or opportunities to make different food choices. The complication of jurisdictional implications also adds complexity to addressing the needs of First Nations populations in Manitoba, without exacerbating racial tensions. The results of this study instead suggest that a holistic approach to reducing sugar intake would be most effective. The perspectives of small business owners inform an approach where the socioeconomic factors that both directly and indirectly contribute to excess sugar consumption are targeted. Moreover, participants call for health policy making that acknowledges and ameliorates the failures of governments and corporations to the working class, marginalized, and lower income segments of society, which have normalized sugar intake in society.

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Book Review

Hunger: How food shaped the course of the First World War. By Rick Blom Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019. 236 pages

Review by Laurie A. Wadsworth

"Food, or rather the lack of it, was one of the things that decided the war's defining moments." (p. x). Rick Blom, an experienced journalist with a history background, states this as the premise of a book that highlights the macro- and micro-level effects of food availability in Britain, Germany, and France during World War I (WWI). The complexities of economic and physical access to food presented are similar to the global situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the term *supply chain* entered colloquial use. Over eleven chapters, Blom draws on multiple primary data sources including letters, journals and memoirs, armed forces general orders, and interviews with surviving veterans, as well as reports from personal re-enactment experiences in Belgium. The latter provide an intriguing addition to the factual information from primary sources presented in the book. Blom chose three activities that might provide a deeper understanding of the daily lives of troops. They include sampling Bully Beef Pie at a period restaurant in West Flanders. The tinned cured meat used in the dish—corned beef—was a central part of rations for WWI soldiers. A second activity took Blom to Passchendaele, where he assisted three cooks in a rebuilt field kitchen, preparing food for battle re-enactors. For the third activity, which took place in Bayernwald, the author spent three days in a restored WWI trench with clothing, supplies, and food rations similar to those available to troops during the war. Blom uses insights from these experiences to add some perspective to challenges of feeding troops on the front lines.

Blom describes foods commonly available, food distribution routes and conveyances, and food shortages for both fighting forces and civilians. This popular history provides an explanation of life in the trenches and on the home fronts highlighting the role food played in quality of life. While engaging, viewing war through a food lens is not a unique approach to discussing food insecurity. Food availability has been studied for past conflicts such as the Crimean War

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(Nightingale, 1858; Soyer, 1857), and the US Civil War (Hertzler, 2004).

The book includes many potentially interesting details of food supplies during WWI, such as quartermaster listings of not only foodstuffs, but also of all supplies. The compartmentalized information presentation leaves the reader to contextualize most of the information. While there is a lack of integration and interpretation of the many sources and types of information, the included facts may open up discussions in which the contextualization of food and conflict might occur. Such topics include ground battles that destroyed farmland, difficulties of food delivery to armies on the move, and troop and civilian morale in the face of food shortages. For example, as the war progressed, food supplies on home fronts in England and Germany became markedly scarce. By 1916, "the German navy sank an average of more than 300,000 tonnes of ships' stores per month." (p.107). Losses of imported foods and other supplies added further complexity to food availability. Governments encouraged people to eat less and waste nothing while implementing major restrictions to food procurement. The roots of community gardens, urban farms, and soup kitchens began before the war ended. Negative health impacts surfaced, including malnutrition and starvation. These situations led to strikes, protests, looting, and riots in both nations. Support for the war declined markedly in home countries. Blom reports the similarities between the home fronts and front lines in terms of shortages affecting morale and unrest, but fails to clearly compare and contrast the geographically separated situations.

Most information presented in the book is drawn from primary sources. The use of secondary sources helps put some of the difficulties outlined into the context of past wars. For example, the use of untrained cooks and lower grades of coal in field kitchens, and the lack of adequate rations for fighting troops, can be compared to situations reported to a Royal Commission on the failures of the British army during the Crimean War. Blom reports that rations for troops provided inadequate energy and nutrients. During training, some British troops gained weight with the meager rations, which points to the poor physical health of malnourished recruits. Similar findings occurred during the Crimean War over 50 years earlier, when troops received insufficient food to maintain a healthy fighting force (Nightingale, 1858). A discussion of whether military commanders had learned from the mistakes of the earlier war might add interest and context for the reader. In this way, the issues faced in WWI can be seen as similar and not unique problems of war.

While Blom presents much detailed information, the text is difficult to read due to phrasing that creates confusion in several places. This may be due to multiple translations, given the many sources of information from several languages that were first translated into Dutch for the 2008 book, which was subsequently translated into English for this current edition. Chapters end with a few errant recipes taken from period army and household cookbooks. While interesting, in some places these seem jarringly out of place, such as when meat-based recipes follow a discussion of the scarcity of the primary ingredient.

Blom's premise that food shaped the direction and outcome of the war is not fully supported by the information presented. Impacts of the war on food supplies and impacts of food distribution on the war outcome are both presented. These are inextricably intertwined concepts, so it is highly likely that both were part of the progress of WWI. Again, looking at conflict situations through a food lens provides an intriguing way to study the many aspects of war. The detailing of the wider determinants of food supply that

impact past and current conflict situations make this a timely book suitable for audiences interested in food security, armed conflicts, and history. The amassing of solid primary source information may serve as a starting point for further research and academic work, and academic audiences will find this a valuable resource for the many illustrative points of the far-reaching effects and interconnectedness of food supply chain disruptions.

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Film Review

First we eat: Food sovereignty north of 60

A film by Suzanne Crocker

Drift Productions

https://firstweeat.ca/

Review by Catherine Littlefield and Patricia Ballamingie*

Suzanne Crocker's (2020) *First we eat* chronicles the efforts of one family to explore greater food sovereignty in Dawson City, Yukon, on the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Crocker instigates this experiment and her family obliges, accepting significant changes to their diets with humor and grace. She explains that she is "planning to spend an entire year eating only food that can be grown, gathered, and hunted around Dawson" (2020, 2:02). *First we eat* offers an educational look at the topics of local northern food security and food sovereignty.

La Via Campesina (2021) an international farmers' rights organization, coined the concept of food sovereignty in the 1990s to assert "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods"—including the right "to define their own food and agriculture systems" (para. 8). As a counter movement to the neoliberal food system, its proponents privilege the vision and needs of people over profits and recognize the diversity of peasant, rural, and Indigenous communities engaged in food systems.

First we eat highlights significant challenges to northern food sovereignty. Living 300 km south of the Arctic Circle, with 97% of food trucked into Dawson City, residents remain vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. A road closure into the territory due to a landslide served as a "wake-up call" for Crocker: grocery store shelves ran bare within forty-eight hours. Food insecurity in northern communities is a complex issue related to logistical, environmental, socio-economic, and political challenges, including high costs, limited access to appropriate foods, and climate change (Blom et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2019, 2020). These challenges, coupled with supply chain disruptions, highlight the need for increased food systems resilience and

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redundancy, building lasting capacity to provide sufficient food at multiple levels (Mahoney et al., 2022). Blay-Palmer and colleagues (2020, 2021) call for increased connection between production and consumption as well as redundancy in the supply chain—multiple, overlapping supply chain sources that help maintain resilience through diversity.

Yukon producers face unique challenges and unpredictable hazards, including a short growing season and the potential for an early frost, drought, hail, or locusts. Disproportionate climate change impacts in the north, including shifting animal patterns and more frequent and severe weather events, represent additional stressors (Auditor General of Canada, 2017). *First we eat* highlights these challenges while demonstrating openings for increased capacity, creativity, and community in the local food system.

Crocker realizes early on in the film that she cannot do this alone and develops personal connections with local producers—she knows their names, locations, practices, and challenges. The film highlights the critical role played by local farmers and producers—sustaining the Crocker family through their journey, sharing not only food but also the knowledge and skills to grow, gather, hunt, process, and store it. Connectedness and cohesion across the food system facilitate greater innovation and resource sharing (Mahoney et al., 2022). Lessons from Crocker's experiment suggest a need for increased knowledge-sharing and community connection in efforts to localize food systems and augment food sovereignty.

The film demonstrates the level of food literacy required to achieve a higher degree of self-sufficiency, showing just how intensive food production, preparation, processing, and storage can be—including such tasks as churning butter, killing and defeathering a chicken, and milling flour. Crocker and her family expand their diets by harvesting wild edibles such as spruce tips and juniper berries, trying lynx meat and burbot liver, and receiving gifts of salmon eggs and moose nose—both delicacies—from Indigenous friends. In fact, much that the Crocker family learns reflects knowledge embedded in local and Indigenous food practices.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have lived in and around the area now known as Dawson City for generations and hold ancestral knowledge of how to gather, hunt, fish, process, store, and share local foods. Indigenous food sovereignty is critical for the continuity of knowledge embedded in local food systems. Proponents of Indigenous food sovereignty (e.g., Morrison, 2020) emphasize the importance of self-determination and customary food practices for sustainable and equitable food systems. Traditional food practices have multiple benefits, including for spiritual, cultural, social, and physical health (Batal et al., 2021). For Crocker and other northern settlers, there is much to be learned from Indigenous peoples in the Yukon, who maintain a relatively high consumption of traditional foods, important for health, community well-being, culture, ecological integrity, and sovereignty (Koberinski et al., 2022; Pratt, 2020). The film highlights the multidimensional values of food and the importance of connecting and learning through communal food networks.

Increased connectedness in the food system facilitated innovation at the household level for Crocker. The quest for salt and sugar—two critical items often taken for granted—offered an interesting sub-plot. Sugar proved less elusive, with sweetness derived from honeycomb, birch water, and sugar beets. But the lengths to which Crocker went for salt demonstrated both its scarcity and its necessity. From drying and burning coltsfoot (a flower whose tissues bioaccumulate salt, making it a wilderness seasoning), to cooking mineral licks (the mud animals lick for essential minerals and

salts), to evaporating salt from a friend's dried blood serum, the journey to acquire salt took some unexpected turns. Crocker's support from her immediate family and wider community surely aided her in making it through the challenging yet rewarding year, as did her position of privilege as a settler with a presumed degree of affluence. Crocker's daughter muses that if it can be done here, it can be done almost anywhere (2020, 1:30:33)—an implicit invitation to all eaters in local, regional, and global food systems to eat more locally. The changes needed, challenges encountered, and creativity required to do so for one year reflect the disconnect between consumers, producers, and land in contemporary and settler food systems. *First we eat* inspires reconnection with food, land, and community, encouraging a healthy curiosity toward the foods that grow, or *could* grow, all around us. Further, the film prompts critical reflection on how Indigenous land, food sovereignty, and knowledge are central to discussions of localizing food systems.

First we eat holds pedagogical value and serves as a springboard for discussions about food security, localizing food systems, and food sovereignty. The film encourages viewers to be more mindful of where their food is coming from and to reflect on how they might become more connected to their local food system (*What can I do*, 2021). Eating entirely locally for one year in Dawson City is ambitious, but this feat contains many tidbits that inspire smaller steps one could take to support local and community-level food systems.

Discussion Questions

Drawing on La Via Campesina's (2021) definition of food sovereignty, which aspects of this concept does the film illustrate?

What would eating locally from your current foodshed look like? If you were to frame your consumption of local food along a continuum, what steps might you take to become less reliant on global supply chains and more locally self-sufficient?

The Yukon is heavily subsidized by the rest of Canada through transfer payments. How might some of those resources be spent on developing greater local productive capacity?

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