



**BC Food Systems Network
Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty
9th Annual Meeting
Part 2**

**Cross Cultural Interface
Where Indigenous and Sustainable Agri-Food Systems Intra-act**

Session Report

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Dakelh Elder Sheila Erickson welcomed us to the land and traditional Dakelh territory, and shared some cultural knowledge about how the Dakelh traditionally governed themselves through the potlatch system and the different the roles of different clans i.e. caribou: keeping people together, and the bear relates to medicine. Sabina Dennis helped us observe cultural and spiritual protocol by singing the Dakelh Caribou song.

Dawn set the tone of the meeting in mindfulness and shared her practice of changing breaths and sitting in the quiet to maintain energy in a balanced way through each transition of activities and help us fully imbibe what each person is saying.

Presentation: Decolonizing Research and Relationships – Methodology for Shining a Holographic Light on the Cultural Interface where Indigenous Hunting, Fishing and Gathering meets the Sustainable – Agri-food System

“The medicine is in the question, and the answer is in the wheel”. This quote expresses the transformative paradigm that underlies the teachings of the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel is a symbol that is used for guiding us along a journey of healing and learning to find balance and wellbeing.

My recent position as the Indigenous Research Associate position at Kwantlen Polytechnic University Institute for Sustainable Food Systems provided an opportunity to reflect on several years of cross cultural dialogue between the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty

(WGIFS) and the BCFSN. The input and direction received from an Indigenous Research Advisory Committee in the KPU project combined with supporting literature I gathered in my research, helped to deepen my analysis and formalize this methodology.

The Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty has been working since March of 2006 to Indigenize the food system discourse within the BCFSN, and affirms Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering strategies in the forests, fields and waterways. The BC Food Systems Network nurtures a collective consciousness in dialogue that is broadening the scope of food systems analysis and shifting the paradigm towards a more sustainable food system. This cross cultural interface methodology was an outcome of that reflection that was inspired in part, by the Abra Brynne, former Director on the Board of the BCFSN, who once asked the question “where is the junction between Indigenous food system and the sustainable agri-food system?”. The network nurtures connections and a willingness to observe cultural protocols by acknowledging traditional territories of Indigenous peoples and seeking a deeper feeling of spirit and place with each location the annual Gathering travels to.

A review of decolonizing methodology and quantum physics literature aligns with the transformer paradigm as it is encoded within the Coyote teachings of my Secwepemc peoples, and affirms that we shape our reality based how we observe it. The principles of complementarity and entanglement outlined in quantum physics are complementary to the Indigenous eco-philosophy encoded within many diverse languages and cultural practices and protocols that affirm how “we are all one”.

This transformative methodology is more culturally responsive than the statistics orientation of a techno-bureaucratic approach, and shines a holographic light that gives deeper meaning and understanding of how our realities are entangled and knowledge systems cross fertilize¹. Rather than thinking of two separate systems, the methodology identifies key points of interface and provides a framework for thinking about how the two expressions of reality are entangled as sub-systems of a larger whole.

The language and terminology of “identifying key points” was acquired in the cross cultural learning exchange with Indigenous fisher peoples in South Africa, where they developed an effective framework for assessing key conditions for having their fishing rights recognized in policy after the end of apartheid. Some key points of entry into a journey of better understanding how the two food systems are entangled are: land and water strategies, characteristics of bio-cultural heritage, paradigm, model of economy etc... The following is a non-exhaustive description that helps us better understand how these key points of entry are being expressed to the extent possible within each of the respective sub systems of the food system as a whole (Indigenous and sustainable agri-food system).

The methodology outlines a very practical yet powerful and inclusive process that takes us to a learning edge to better understand how to transcend the paradoxes that live within points of contention, and realize the potential that exists within the gaps of knowledge. The ways in

1. Holographic epistemology is outlined by Indigenous scholar Manulani Meyer who teaches about how the hologram is a powerful metaphor for helping us better understand the depth and rigour of the Indigenous mind. For more information google the full article titled: Holographic Epistemology - Native Common Sense.

which the sacred interconnected relationships intra-act are non-exhaustive and infinite and there is huge potential in the unseen world and gaps of knowledge.

Key points of entry into a journey of better understanding how the sustainable agri-food system is being expressed – Presentation by Heather Pritchard, Farm Program Manager, Farm Folk/City Folk

Heather has been involved in the BCFSN for many years and highlights the breakthrough we experienced at last year's gathering (2014) where we discussed conservation of agricultural land in the face of the most recent land grabbing and rezoning of the Agricultural Land Reserve in the province. The scope of the conversation was expanded beyond production agriculture, to give voice and vision to outstanding Indigenous land and food system issues, concerns, situations and strategies.

Heather lives on a co-op farm with others in a generous community who observes rituals, processes, and practices that follow permaculture design principles that are complementary to Indigenous food systems. "We don't cut down trees. We celebrate the seasons, and care for the local salmon streams. We also gather, (forage) sell, preserve in a small scale market economy". The co-op does not follow the highly unsustainable model of conventional agriculture, and goes beyond the production farming to live "in place", and nurtures reciprocal relationships. In this model of sustainability, the farming community is not valued simply by economics. The process of growing and harvesting is a "spiritual practice with a belief you do not have to own it to be part of it.

Heather comes from a Mennonite farming background and her grandmother was her mentor. Her grandmothers motto was "I come to visit not to judge". However, Heather is very critical to the industrial food system and is working with Young Agrarians and is encouraged that they are not in the least bit interested in promoting GMOs, fish farms, or large scale conventional agriculture. Heather also works with a network of approximately 20 – 30 community farms in the BCFSN and beyond within a shared vision to make farm land more accessible to people. Some of the land is donated, and is being held in trust. The land is not for sale, nor does it have speculative value. The land trust is a strategy for protecting farmland within the Canadian legal system.

Key "points of entry" into a journey of better understanding how the Indigenous food system is being expressed – Presentation by Dawn Morrison

Indigenous peoples have been living in place since time immemorial and have adapted some of the most sustainable food strategies strategies of humanity (hunting, fishing and gathering). Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering societies are expressed through a complex system of bio-cultural heritage in land, knowledge, social and ecological relationships, and a subsistence model of giving economy. The giving economies of ancient Indigenous food systems persist into the 21st century and are mixed with contemporary mainstream economic strategies in the capitalist wage economy where Indigenous peoples live within a 4th world reality².

2 The term 4th world was coined by the late Grand Chief George Manuel in his book titled: The Fourth World: An Indian Reality . The term identifies with the sovereign Indigenous nations living in 3rd world conditions within in a 1st world nation state in Canada.

The Indigenous giving and trading economy begins with observing the cultural protocol of praying and giving offerings to the spirits in the unseen world where unlimited potential lies. Observing spiritual protocol by giving to the spirits nurtures a transformative energy and sets the intention for being mindful of the ways in which we are connected to one another, and the plants and animals that provide us with our food.

There is a wealth of bio-cultural heritage - knowledge, traditions, rituals, songs and ceremonies encoded within our ancestral memories that have been observed, practiced and received by wild salmon and other important plants and animals for thousands of years. As our most important Indigenous food, the bio-cultural heritage of wild salmon is imprinted in the genetic code of the 27 nations of Indigenous peoples that inhabit BC, as well as the genetic code of many other species who rely on them for their food. As a cultural and ecological keystone species their heritage is “entangled” with the heritage of other many other beings in the Indigenous food web. i.e. humans, bears, eagles, wolves, trees etc...

Reproduction and propagation of Indigenous plant species, many of which are perennial, shrubs or trees, involves a much more complex process than annual vegetable crops. In contrast to the broader ecological and temporal scale of the bio-cultural heritage that is expressed in Indigenous plants and animal species used for foods and medicines, the bio-cultural heritage expressed within the seeds of annual vegetable crops die and reproduce in a yearly basis. Not all Indigenous plant and animal species need humans to scarify or stratify the seeds for reproduction, but introduced annual fruits and vegetables do because they have been domesticated.

Below is a list of 4 main principles to guide Indigenous food sovereignty research, action and policy proposals within the complex system of bio-cultural heritage in which it can be achieved.

1. Sacredness and divine sovereignty – We get our sovereignty directly from our Creator/Great Spirit. It is our responsibility rather than our right, to uphold sacred relationships to one another and the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food
2. Participatory – Indigenous food sovereignty can only be achieved if we are actively participating in Indigenous food (hunting, fishing, gathering and sustainable farming) related activities on a day to day basis
3. Self – determination – to be free from the corporate control and oppressive land, water and social policies and practices
4. Policy – Indigenous food sovereignty is ultimately “grounded in practice” but is negatively impacted by oppressive colonial policies and requires a balanced approach to forming and influencing policy.

Discussion: Identify key points of intersections within the cultural interface and the ways in which they intra-act (complementary or contentious).

Points of contention

1. Paradigm and systemic barriers - Agriculture has not acknowledged the devastating impact on the Indigenous land and food system as a whole. Licensing, leasing and other imposed land and water rights based strategies make it difficult to reconcile outstanding Indigenous land claims within the doctrine of discovery and terra nullius paradigm that underlies the courts and the agricultural land conservation discourse. The legal doctrine instituted within the techno bureaucratic framework on which land and water agencies operate, has enabled the political specialization that led to the colonial expansion which in turn, has dispossessed Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering societies in so called BC. Colonial election system is inherently violent and divisive in the way it was established, and promotes adversarial relationships.
2. Paradigm and systemic barriers - The reductionist mindset of western science has reduced Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering corridors to the silos and sectors of government agencies asserting full jurisdiction over land and water. The resulting fragmentation ultimately limits the sustainability of the agri-food system which is interdependent on the healthy functioning of the neighbouring Indigenous food system in the forests, fields and waterways.
3. Privatization and water - Colonial governments are allowing the sale of water to Nestle Corporation in Hope, BC. The privatization and sale of water is a major threat to maintaining adequate quantities of water in the Fraser Valley where approximately 2/3 of the streams and important salmon habitat have already been lost or are endangered due to dyking, agricultural use, contamination, encroachment etc... Reference: The book Native Peoples and Water Rights. Irrigation, Dams and the Law in Western Canada by Kenichi Matsui provides an in depth study inter-disciplinary study of how the legal doctrine and agrarianism has led to the colonial expansion and dispossession of Indigenous peoples in BC.
4. Privatization and patenting - Chaga is only one example of a traditional food/medicine that is being over-exploited and sold as a non-timber forest "product" in the capitalist market economy. Chaga has great value and is more than just a "product". The cultural, spiritual and ecosystem values cannot be valued in a mathematical formula within a linear productionist paradigm. The similar vein of privatization and patent laws that have threatened the bio-cultural heritage of quinoa in Peru, there is concern over recent attempts to patent these sacred plants that are a part of our complex system of bio-cultural heritage.
5. Model of economy - Capitalist language does not accurately reflect the paradigm of Indigenous peoples who maintain deep ecological and spiritual relationships with plants and animals that provide us with our foods in a regenerative - life giving paradigm. Indigenous peoples do not refer to our food as "resources" to be exploited to an external means. Nor do we think of our food as a mere "product" or object devoid of deeper meaning and cultural and spiritual significance. Some feel the discussion around choosing more appropriate language and terminology to describe our relationships in the land and food system is mere semantics, but it is important to realize the energy that words carry to the universe, and the ways that capitalist and productionist

paradigm robs us of the beautiful and rich context of our history, and the deeper spiritual meaning that can help shift the mindset required to chart a more sustainable food system.

6. Culture and capacity - Contamination of Indigenous land (on and off reserve) from neighbouring farms who spray pesticides make it difficult to grow organically.
7. Culture and capacity - Capacity and burden are not balanced across cultures and there is a lot of privilege in mainstream society that is not balanced in Indigenous communities. The relationship between the injustice experienced by Migrant Farm Workers and Indigenous peoples in Canada is complex. There is a need to work at multiple scales from the local, regional, and international within the global 4th world reality in which we live, to build relationships with new migrant farm workers, and be more inclusive.

“Due to a lack of registration, the workshop on apathy was cancelled”

Points of complementary

The foodlands conversation that happened at the 2014 Gathering in Sorrento was a demonstration of the dedication of the BCFSN to understand and advocate more deeply on the broader issues that have dispossessed Indigenous voices and visions from food system discourse.

Acknowledgement of Indigenous land title and demonstrated willingness to work from there to adapt farming practices and address underlying land and water policy issues.

The BCFSN has demonstrated a willingness to learn to work together in a community process, with awareness, intention, and sensitivity to the challenges of working with the diverse socio-political realities and worldviews in communities.

Regular cross cultural workshops to increase awareness and understanding of cultural protocols to observe in working with Indigenous communities to – accept people where they are at and create a respectful environment so people can gain equal understanding with dignity

The Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks Key Findings provides a summary of cultural values, practices, and protocols to observe when working with Indigenous communities. (See attached)

The principles of permaculture and yield versus “production” are two examples of the ways that farmers are learning to “live in place” and are strategies for minimizing the ecological impact that agriculture is having on the interdependent Indigenous land and food system as a whole.

Shift the economic paradigm towards a mixed economy that embraces Indigenous values and principles of giving and trading within a small scale market economic strategy.

Assess the transportation and communication infrastructure for an international fair trading system with Indigenous peoples living in 3rd world conditions. i.e. railways, and low cost access to freight.

Identify potential that exists within the gaps of knowledge and points of contention

Points of contention carry potential to work together in complementary ways to overcome colonial guilt, transcend paradox, and provide a critical pathway to shifting the economic framework based on international cooperative principles and a return to Indigeneity. "Earth care, people care, fair share".

Assess how far the BCFSN is willing and able to go to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples on the most critical and contentious Indigenous food sovereignty issues. i.e. land, water, economic paradigm, etc...

Prioritize potential by pulling together and working across cultures in complementary ways to flex, practice, build trust in relationships, and balance out power dynamics.

Let's try to build on what we already are doing and work with allies to build strength and resiliency for overcoming learning tensions that exist within points of contention and gaps in knowledge.

Appreciate and inquire into the cross cultural relationships between farmers, ranchers and Indigenous peoples working together to stop Site C Dam in the Peace River Region.

Talking and consultation is not enough. We need to assess our capacity to actualize our potential and think of ways to make the workload easier by decreasing the burden of less privileged individuals and communities to respond in a balanced way.

Development of projects that serve to actualize potential action items listed above, ultimately depends on the capacity of the WGIFS, BCFSN, and individuals, groups and communities to come together and work across cultures.

Putting land back into the commons and avoid privatization - advocate for converting "Crown" land to foodland.

Map out bio-cultural heritage corridors and routes of traditional trade networks.

Map out land in territories to assess and protect, conserve and restore remaining fragments of lands and waterways for salmon habitat and Indigenous food harvesting (hunting, fishing, farming, and gathering).

Demarcate a baby beach in each community that will send a message loud and clear to all people that the land and water is being valued for present and future generations of babies and children.

Change conversation at policy and planning tables by expanding the scope of "food lands" conversation to include Indigenous land and food issues, concerns, situations and strategies and ensure it is not co-opted into an unsustainable and neocolonialist agenda. Articulate and explore the concept of foodlands and ask if there is other terminology or ways to express it in Indigenous languages.

Make Indigenous food sovereignty an election issue – federal election in October and provincial election in 2 years. Develop a policy primer to add to the WGIFS toolkit that will inform, educate and mobilize communities around the issue of IFS.

Facilitate actual partnership between farmers and Indigenous peoples “on the ground”. i.e. Creating Buffer Zones, map out bio-cultural heritage areas, reclaim land, holistic management of domesticated and Indigenous animal species, land agreements, land trusts, etc...

Research and highlight integrated farming projects that practice holistic management and take into account Indigenous peoples, plants and animals that provide us with our food in forest, rangeland and waterways.

Identify models from Indigenous Nations that could be used for a planning process. i.e. Tsawwassen Farm School, Lil'wat Agricultural Plan, and Seabird Island Traditional Food Bank.

Salmon Safe Certification Program is one example of a program that promotes better farming practices to minimize their impact on the Indigenous food system as a whole.

Salvage and process and redistribute food being wasted in the grocery stores. Large amount of waste in the agri-food system is taboo.

Develop questionnaires and surveys for communities to identify relevant issues, concerns, situations, and strategies and assess their own levels of food sovereignty.

Research and organize a decentralized model of rotational leadership that honours the dedication and commitment of individuals who are demonstrating their willingness and ability to do the work.

Action Items:

Seek funding to reconvene the WGIFS to come together to discuss strategic direction, and assess the willingness and ability of members to develop specific projects. Funding is needed for travel, venue, meals, facilitation and follow up reporting, development of toolkit.

Work collaboratively with the BCFSN to create a vision statement and develop an Earth Protocol and Unity Declaration that honours the natural laws, and Indigenous knowledge and governance, and supports the re-Indigenization process.

Collaborate with St'at'imc Chief Darrell Bob to plan, promote, and facilitate the Traditional Trade Fair at International Indigenous Leadership Gathering in St'at'imx territory – tentative date June 5 & 6, 2016

Promote and support the planning of the Wild Salmon Convergence in Chase as a strategic meeting to plan and mobilize communities for the Wild Salmon Caravan being planned for June 2016.

Look for funding and support to host an Indigenous Food Systems Network Gathering that would celebrate the 10th anniversary of the WGIFS and bring together nations, tribes and

communities from across the province. Consider the potential strategies outlined above in the drafting of the program for the gathering.

Host a potlach and feast.

Develop communications strategy that balances the use of technology with in person relationships in community outreach, and “fans out” from other networks such as the First Nations Health Authority – Engagement Coordinator, etc...

Develop tool kits for mobilizing and mentoring individuals and communities on the topic of Indigenous Food Sovereignty – expressions of interest have come from the Shuswap and Northern regions.

Develop communication tools that are solutions oriented, highlights work that has been done, and has consistent branding and messages from WGIFS.

Update IFSN website

Pamphlet/brochure

“Crown land to foodland” policy primer for upcoming elections

Make a presentation on TED X Talks.

Others?

Explore feasibility to facilitate online meetings to engage more people, keeping in mind that the quality of the engagement might not be as good as it would be with fewer key people involved. Quality versus quantity. Small group conversations on google hangout could help to build momentum.

Find funding to offer honorariums and expenses to travel to northern communities to extend the Revitalizing Traditional Trade Research - apply the same questions asked in the previous community conversations conducted by the Revitalizing Traditional Trade: Decolonizing Research and Relationships Sub-Committee.

Plan and host a 2 day workshop to learn the Chinook Language from anthropologist Keith Thor Carlson.