



**BC Food Systems Network
Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty
9th Annual Meeting Report
Part 1**

**Prepared by: Dawn Morrison
Date: August 2015**

Participants: Jeannie Parnell, Rosemary Plummer, Cheryl Thomas, Julia Russell, Pam Providence, Diana Kaloy, Sabina Dennis, Sheila Erickson, Brent Mansfield, Edith Frederick, Robert Frederick, Norine Messer, Tammy Lea Meyer, Victoria Carter

- 1. Setting the spiritual intention – opening prayer, smudge and food offering**
- 2. Official welcoming into Dakelh (Lleidli Tenneh) Traditional Territory – Edith and Robert Frederick, Dakelh Elders**

Dakelh Elders Edith Frederick offered prayers and welcoming into Lheidli T'enneh Territory and outlined the boundaries of Dakelh territory where they meet the neighbouring Secwepemc, Ts'ilqotin and Wet'su'weten Nations. Edith shared some oral history about hunting, fishing and gathering in the Willow River area, and Edith's husband Robert Frederick shared the oral history about the sacredness of Tsitniz Lake and the spiritual ceremonies that were traditionally held there. Edith discussed how the sacred areas, spiritual stories and ceremonies are to be held in trust they would never be flaunted, and also pointed out that the oral history has been influenced by the way it is interpreted through the Catholic Church. The story stressed the sacredness of hunting, fishing and gathering traditional foods in the area and talked about the migration of moose in the area and the kinds of foods still being harvested in the present day. Edith stressed some of the serious issues around forestry spraying herbicides and chemicals on traditional harvesting sites and how they have witnessed increasing cases of cancer and other sickness in the communities.

3. Background and history of the WGIFS

The WGIFS was founded by myself (Dawn Morrison) and Jessica Chenery in March of 2006. Since then I have consistently held the space within the BC Food Systems Network and beyond, as the

Chair/Coordinator/Facilitator of the Indigenous food sovereignty discussions at many levels, local, regional, domestic and international. Our main purpose is to increase awareness of the unique issues, concerns and strategies impacting Indigenous hunters, fishers, farmers, and gatherers and our abilities to respond to our own needs for Indigenous foods in the forests, fields and waterways. We share similar concerns with BC Food Systems Network in relation to social and environmental justice in the land and food system as a whole, but our issues, concerns, situations and strategies are unique to our longstanding relationships to the land and food system and the historical injustices we have experienced in the food system.

WGIFS consists of 18 members whom provide input, direction, time, and energy into the development of Indigenous food sovereignty related research, action or policy proposals. Our work has gained international recognition. In October of 2015, I was invited to give a presentation to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization International Expert Seminar titled: Cultural Diversity, Food Systems and Traditional Livelihoods in Cusco, Peru, and UNESCO has expressed interest in learning about our methodology for community engagement. We have also received honourable mention for the US Food Sovereignty Prize that was given in New Orleans , Louisiana in 2010. The WGIFS was invited to give strategic direction and input into the development of the BC Provincial Health Eating Strategy – First Nations and Aboriginal Action Plan, and several Indigenous tribes and nations from BC and beyond have called on the WGIFS to facilitate and provide background information for their strategic planning sessions. i.e. Sto'lo, Secwepemc, Nishnawbe Aski, Treaty 4 Saskatchewan.

Some of the most notable community based projects we have developed are:

- Provincial Health Authority – Indigenous Food Sovereignty Community Outreach (16 communities in BC)
- Indigenous Food Systems Network Website Planning and Development
<http://indigenousfoodsystems.org/>
- Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks: Decolonizing Research and Relationships
http://nyeleni.org/spip.php?page=NWarticle.en&id_article=457

Over the last 9 years our level of understanding and analysis has deepened and we have increased our awareness and sensitivity to the burden of response carried by Indigenous individuals, organizations, and communities who are being challenged to respond to the huge numbers of proposals for research and development in our respective communities and territories. Therefore, the WGIFS operates on a very informal basis and has a very fluid and flux membership that we honour for the time, energy and ideas that members can give when they are able to.

We strive to operate within a cultural concept of time that accommodates the ability of WGIFS community members to respond and participate in a meaningful and mindful way without imposing additional stress in their already busy lives and agendas. The Call to Participate Letter outlines the roles, responsibilities and areas of focus and objectives of the WGIFS (See appendix).

The Indigenous Food Systems Network was born out of the work of the WGIFS to network and share relevant knowledge and engage in dialogue so we can learn how to nurture relationships and support more Indigenous food related action. The tribal values of working together in extended networks have always been our biggest strength, but networking is often undervalued as a credible activity for its own intents and purposes within the highly competitive and individualistic neoliberal corporate agendas that dominate society. Networking is important for building on existing efforts and actions of communities, and appreciating and inquiring into characteristics of strength and resiliency that are encoded within our ancestral memories to increase our ability to adapt to the rapid changes that are happening in the world.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty – Key Concepts and Principles

I recognize that the term food sovereignty is somewhat problematic and imperialistic in its etymological underpinnings that connotes that we/humans control or reign over our food. In contrast to “reigning over and controlling”, the Indigenous worldview reflects the realization that the Creator has the final say, and *we work with our higher power, rather than control*, to increase awareness and become more self-realized in a mirror of cross cultural relationships to one another and the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food. Therefore, from an Indigenous worldview it would be more appropriate to use language that promotes working with natural systems in the ethical and spiritual ways we traditionally relate to the land, plants and animals.

Nonetheless, we use the term food sovereignty because it is gaining attention within the global movement of 200 million small scale farmers, fishers, and Indigenous peoples around the world who are resisting the corporate control of the food system and mobilizing to define the right of peoples to respond to our own needs for food. Indigenous food sovereignty is a relatively new concept that has been introduced into Indigenous communities in the 4th world realities of which Indigenous peoples persist in Canada. While the concept and terminology is new, the living reality of food sovereignty is not a new one. Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering strategies are some of the most sustainable adaptation strategies of humanity. While many of the practices and protocols have persisted into the 21st century, the traditional social structures and interdependent relationship to the land, water, plants and animals have been fragmented by the techno-bureaucratic framework instituted within colonial institutions.

Therefore, WGIFS works with the term food sovereignty to appreciate and inquire into the underlying issues, concerns, situations and strategies impacting our ability to respond to our own needs for adequate amounts of healthy Indigenous foods in the forests, fields and waterways. What I have learned from the teachings that Indigenous peoples have shared, follow four main principles that guide the kinds of research, actions, and policy proposals that will address the underlying issues identified by communities.

- Sacredness and divine sovereignty – We get our sovereignty directly from our Creator/Great Spirit. It is our responsibility to uphold sacred relationships to one another and the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food.

- 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
- Self – determination – to be free from the corporate control and oppressive land, water and social policies and practices
- 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.

The following is a list of tasks and activities to fill within the role as Director of the WGIFS, which is now being given part time salary within the BC Food Systems Network. The list identifies projects and activities that require ongoing attention and increased time, energy, as well as human, financial and technical support to sustain the efforts of the WGIFS on a day to day basis. A list of additional projects to develop and build on is included below.

Planning and coordination of participation in annual meetings to reconvene WGIFS at the BC Food Systems Network Gathering, and sub-committee meetings for individual projects (Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks, IFSN Website, ALR Democracy Working Group, etc...).

- A. Update and manage the IFSN website <http://indigenousfoodsystems.org/>
- B. Host two email listserves wgifs@bcfsn.org and ifs@bcfsn.org
- C. Respond to the emails and the research and policy proposals
- D. Administration of funding and projects
- E. Outreach and travel for presentations at various relevant forums, conferences, seminars and discussions at all of the local, regional and global scales.
- F. Mentoring Indigenous representatives into the role of carrying voice and vision of the WGIFS on the BCFSN Steering Committee (formerly the Board of Directors)

Note: The WGIFS listserve is designated specifically for working members of the WGIFS only, so we may correspond on development of projects, meetings and activities, and the Indigenous food sovereignty email listserve is open to anyone in the broader Indigenous Food Systems Network who would like to network, share relevant information, and have online dialogue about relevant issues, concerns and situations. I have been challenged with focusing time to post regularly on the IFS listserve and updating the Indigenous Food Systems Network Website. The website requires some scripting to update, as well as some promotion. It seems as though more and more people are responding to Facebook and the “contact us” page of the IFSN website.

4. Update - recent WGIFS project and activities

Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks: Decolonizing Research and Relationships Research Project

Sub-committee: Johnnie Manson, Hannah Wittman and Erika Mundel , Dawn Morrison

Conducted literature review, policy scan, community workshop (Sorrento Gathering of 2014) and community interviews (March 2015). The purpose of the project was to help us better understand how to conduct community research in a culturally responsive way and how to promote and facilitate more trading and sharing of Indigenous foods. Research project is complete and I will be working to format the Decolonizing Methodologies Primer, Policy Paper, and Key Findings in the coming weeks. (See attached Revitalizing Traditional Trade – Key Findings Summary).

The literature review revealed the plethora of anthropological literature that sheds light on the trading economies of hunting, fishing and gathering societies in BC and beyond. The key findings of the community based research (workshop and interviews) identified some Indigenous food related values, strategies, practices, and protocols that are still strong and persisting into the 21st century. The community workshop and community based conversations affirmed the value of Indigenous food economies as co-operative giving economies versus competitive corporate model of economies, and the policy scan highlighted some critical policy issues that were outlined in community conversations.

The trade practices and protocols promote reciprocal and regenerative (life giving) principles in a giving and trading, rather than exploitive. Food was traditionally traded for other foods and necessary items as well as for time, energy, and knowledge. As an outcome, the International Indigenous Leadership Gathering offered to host a traditional trade fair at the IILG in the first weekend of June 3 – 6th. There was interest expressed by Syilx (Okanagan) and Secwepemc traditional knowledge holders to meet and share knowledge and research on inter-tribal protocols within the two Interior Salish tribes.

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization International Expert Seminar - Cultural Diversity, Food Systems and Traditional Livelihoods in Cuzco, Peru in November of 2014. Prepared and presented information about the WGIFS and the Revitalizing Traditional Trade Networks – Decolonizing Research and Relationships Project, as well as the Indigenous Food Systems Research at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. The presentation emphasized the ways that the research conducted over the last couple of years at KPU, provided an opportunity to appreciate and reflect on the methodologies for cross cultural understanding and analysis of Indigenous food systems that has taken place within the BCFSN.

Participation in the seminar helped me to learn how the UN is working to map out and conserve Globally Important Agriculture Heritage Systems (<http://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>), and how it may be complementary or contentious to the vision of advocating for identifying and setting aside Indigenous bio-cultural heritage areas that overlap with Indigenous foodlands in so called BC. The seminar also helped me to better understand why it might be an effective strategy to link up with the 2 hundred

million small scale farmers, fishers, and Indigenous peoples around the world who grow and harvest 70% of the world's food, and are organizing under the issue of food sovereignty to resist corporate control of the food system. A copy of the Powerpoint presentation and a written report of my experiences at the seminar is available upon request.

Wild Salmon Convergence (October 2014) - The convergence was organized as a parallel event to the annual Salute to the Sockeye that celebrates the homecoming of the Sockeye Salmon to the Adams River watershed, one of the largest sockeye salmon spawning grounds in the world. The convergence brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous Elders, cultural teachers, oral historians, academics, legal experts, farmers and communities impacted by mining. The main purpose was to build capacity of individuals and communities who are working to protect, conserve and restore water and wild salmon by linking coalitions and campaigns to increase awareness of the many interconnected issues, challenges, and concerns and situations.

The convergence provided the time and space for identifying relevant policy issues, situations, concerns and strategies ranging from: the unsustainable path charted in the large scale global trade related focus of commercial fisheries, to the contamination of important wild salmon migration routes and spawning grounds, to salmon feedlots in open net cage fish farms, and the cumulative impacts of extractive economic activities such as mining, oil and liquid and natural gas "development".

As a strategy for balancing out the stress and uncertainty associated with the lack of control over decision making matters impacting wild salmon, our most culturally important Indigenous food, the convergence provided opportunities to network and appreciate the culture and heritage, and strength and resiliency of the wild salmon who swam by on their way home to the Adams River to play out the final stages of their life cycle.

A local Secwepemc teacher and oral historian, Robert Matthew gave a tour of the salmon spawning grounds and talked about the special multi-millennial relationship between the Secwepemc, the river and the salmon. The weekend event ended with a session where settlers in support of Indigenous fisheries governance shared their experiences with the public Cohen Inquiry and salmon feedlot boycott campaign. Children provided a presentation of their drawings that depicted their interpretations of the issues and strategies, and identified projects and activities for strengthening youth and children's voices in schools and organizations. Break out groups discussed communication strategies for linking coalitions and networks, and developed key messages for call to action tag lines for public art projects that stress the importance of wild salmon and Indigenous food related values, voice and vision to the culture and heritage of BC.

Wild Salmon Caravan (May 10 – 14, 2015) – The highly colourful and spirited caravan built on the strategic discussions and key messages identified at the Wild Salmon Convergence in October of 2014, as well as the willingness and ability of many volunteers who offered their time and energy to plan, promote, mobilize, coordinate and link individuals, organizations, and communities to converge on a week-long caravan from the headwaters of the Fraser River to Vancouver. The purpose of the caravan was to celebrate and honor wild salmon through the arts, culture and heritage and highlight messages

on the value and importance of protecting wild salmon. Indigenous drummers, singers, carvers, artists and dancers along with well-known local musicians, Holly Artnzen and Kevin Wright of Artist Response Team performed songs to honor wild salmon and celebrate the spirit of wild salmon and why we need to prevent their demise.

The caravan followed the migration of the wild salmon that swam as smolts from their spawning grounds in the many streams, lakes, and rivers to the ocean where they grow and return to their respective places of birth to complete their cycles in October. Community and regional coordinators worked with the Wild Salmon Caravan Working Group formed at the Wild Salmon Convergence Gathering in October of 2014, to promote the event, organize speakers and mobilize communities to host dinners, ceremonies, and camp sites along the route of the caravan. The caravan received \$5,000 from the Mennonite Church and \$1,910 from the Gofundme crowd source funding campaign which Sto:lo Elder Eddie Gardener and Dawn Morrison managed through a bank account that was opened at Envision Credit Union in Chilliwack. Funds raised covered the cost of promotional materials, transportation costs, artist supplies, sound equipment, snacks & refreshments, and honorariums for communities hosting meals. The BC Food Systems Network sponsored a series of conference calls to assist with the planning and coordination of the caravan.

Wild Salmon Convergence of 2015 planned for the first week in October in Chase, BC, to strategize on mobilizing coalitions and campaigns, networks, farmers, fishers, artists, and cultural groups to celebrate the spirit of Wild salmon in the Wild Salmon Caravan (2016).

Wild Salmon Caravan 2016 - A funding proposal was submitted to the Canada Council of the Arts Reconciliation Program for The Salmon Will Hear Our Songs” Project. The funding would provide the resources necessary to coordinate and inspire a collection of artists, and curate the creation of transformative artistic expressions. The creative images will shine a holographic light¹ on the ideas and metaphors that flow from within 3rd dimension of the cultural interface where wild salmon meets ancient cultural and spiritual protocols, activism and the serious issues that underlie the industrial storm that is killing them in the 21st Century.

5. Sustainability and Scale of the WGIFS

We are doing our best and always being challenged on the credibility of our work because we work at the grassroots level – but really this is sacred work. We aren’t just sitting around talking – we are shifting the paradigm and are raising awareness of the way we are shaping our reality together across cultures – these are not just meetings – we gain strength – we need to be more self - realizing and bring

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.

a higher level of consciousness into the way our work at the grassroots level is impacting the global reality.

We are dealing with a high level of stress and illness associated with past traumas and social and environmental injustice issues in our families and communities. It is important we respect and honour those that are here and those that can't be here, and do what we can to accommodate more participation in a more informal structure that is sensitive to the cultural values and concept of time, as well as the high context communication patterns of Indigenous people. Important note: The healing process and deep and meaningful truth and reconciliation of past injustices takes time and cannot be rushed or forced into an outside agenda or low context communication pattern or a cultural concept of time that does not reflect Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing.

Indigenous peoples living in a 4th world reality² in Canada are underrepresented in international food sovereignty/security forums, where a growing number of small scale farms, fishers, and Indigenous peoples who are mobilizing to resist the corporate control of the food system. The global reality in which we are working can sometimes be overwhelming when working at the grass roots level with little resources – but we have a long legacy of political activism in our blood and we have can learn from Indigenous activists and communities who have mobilized in Canadian Constitution Express and Indian Child Caravan.

As the Co-Founder and Chair of the WGIFS, Dawn has consistently held the space for the WGIFS at relevant meetings, conferences and discussions, and has been responding to the large number of research proposals from students at universities across Canada, and growing number of film producers and social media. More time and resources are required to reconvene the entire WGIFS membership at a location and date in the near future when more members can participate and their travel and expenses can be provided.

BC is defined according to arbitrary colonial boundaries that are contentious in the way they conflict with the naturally occurring boundaries of major eco-regions or the eco-social and spiritual boundaries of Indigenous nations. A meaningful approach for reconciling with Indigenous peoples in the land and food system would recognize the sovereignty and boundaries of unceded Indigenous territories of the 27 nations of Indigenous peoples. Following the words of Secwepemc leader Art Manuel³, there is value in working across cultures to educate the broad majority of the public on Indigenous food sovereignty issues. Development of a common language and terminology that will increase cross cultural understanding of issues and ways to support Indigenous food related research, action and policy/advocacy issues. It's not about perpetuating racism – it is about the issue of understanding the

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.

3 Read more in Art Manuel's newly launched book titled: Unsettling Canada – A National Wake Up Call (2015).

unsustainable path that's been charted by capitalization, and acknowledging the privilege that Caucasian people carry over Indigenous peoples.

Working at any scale, it is important to avoid universalism in a pan Indian approach, and recognize diversity of cultures in 27 nations of Indigenous peoples in BC – as well as the diversity of socio-political realities that exist in Indigenous communities many of whom live in 3rd world conditions. We need to be sensitive to the ways the mainstream society has impacted Indigenous cultures and food economies in communities who are varying places along the spectrum of maintaining traditional values and governance structures and processes versus entrenchment into colonial institutions and the unsustainable model of “development”. Are we reflecting the diverse reality in our conversations? How do we ‘share this with people in a way that is sustainable for individuals doing the work at an appropriate scale? It’s big!

The world is our audience, but the scale of work needs to be grounded in the communities. Many of the Indigenous Nations visited locally and around the world have shed light on the strategies and work being done on Indigenous food sovereignty. Quechua people in Peru, Indigenous fisher peoples and in South Africa, Sto:lo Nation Wellness Hub, Nishnawbe Aski Nation (Ontario), Fort Hills Qu’appelle Tribal Council Treaty 4 Saskatchewan, First Nations University of Canada, University of Regina, Newfoundland Food Security Network, Food Secure Canada, i.e Interior Health Food Security Forum, and many more.

Many universities, governments as well as non-government agencies across Canada have responded to the work of the WGIFS and inquired into ways to assist in the generation of a supporting body of knowledge in research institutions. In addition, many international organizations have recognized and requested information about our work specifically on innovative methods being used by the WGIFS to improve the participation of people and communities in our meetings. Some of the key international organizations include, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and US Food Sovereignty Alliance.

We need to focus time and energy on raising cross cultural sensitivity and awareness to the broad ecological, cultural and temporal scope and paradigm of Indigenous hunting, fishing and gathering societies, and mentoring young people into leadership roles in the WGIFS and Indigenous food sovereignty movement. We need money to cover the cost of travel to meetings and traditional harvesting and trading areas. It is hoped that we can acquire additional funding to cover the cost of at least a full time position and other small contracts for WGIFS members interested in working on specific projects. The duties of a full time position could include research, administration, update and maintenance of website, and outreach (travel and presentations at various conferences, forums etc...). We also need more funding to cover the cost of travel to our annual WGIFS meeting in a more accessible location and date in the near future when more WGIFS and Indigenous Food System Network members can participate.

It is also important to remember our traditional teachings and gather strength from the earth and stones that symbolize strength and unity and are solid – hard to break.

6. Updates from Indigenous Food Systems Network – Community and Regional Projects and Activities

Julia Russell works in Community Health in the community of Chateh in Dene Tha territory which is located near High Level, Peace River region. Julia was an organic farmer in southern Ontario, and has studied food sovereignty in Bolivia and completed her Master's Thesis on the study of seasonal dynamics of food security amongst the homeless in Northern British Columbia. Julia has worked extensively in Prince George on a where everything's comes back to indigenous food issues, where different communities have similar issues. The majority of homeless in Prince George have an Indigenous background, and colonial system continues to perpetuate the issues, concerns and situations where Indigenous peoples overrepresented in the institutions are given the worst of food in a way that breaks down community and the traditional ways or seasonal foods are not taken into consideration. Emergency food aid is not a healing process, and homeless people are living on the land, but can't use their traditional ways to provide food. Homeless people have no money for gas and transportation for hunting, fishing and there are no fires allowed in the city to cook food. There is resistance building in actions like community gardening, and some people are maintaining connections with home communities to get meat. The systematic ways in which the issues are dealt are inadequate because they only look at the end result and do not address the underlying root causes of disease.

Pam Providence is a member of the Chateh, Dene Tha community – Pam is concerned about the diets of the Dene Tha people and believes the high rate of cancer is linked to contamination by oil and gas development in the tar sands. Pam advocates for research needed to show the links between health and traditional diets, and notes there was a study done by Health Canada but it wasn't made public so the 2-3 year information is not being used. It was suggested that a freedom of information request be made to Health Canada to access this research.

Diana Kolay is also a member of the Chateh, Dene Tha community. Diana lives off the land and continues to live the way her family brought her up. They have traditional feasts for celebrations and collect medicines the same way they would be collected in the old days following the teachings of the Elders. Diana is a teacher to whoever will listen, but she wants to learn more about the gas-oil research. She knows many people in the community with respiratory problems and feels it is linked to the poisonous gas from the oil and gas. Diana teaches those who want to know more about their traditional foods they fish and hunt locally, but sees how some of the younger family members do not want to learn. Diana notes that Site c Dam is ruining the scenery because industrial plants are showing up.

Victoria Carter Victoria Carter lives in Terrace and is the Lead for Integration and Engagement with Northern Health (NH) - Aboriginal Health Program. Victoria was adopted into the Nisga'a Nation and is writing a book to try to make sense of colonization and help her children who carry genes from their Nisga'a father and her non-Native ancestry. Victoria sees the health values of traditional foods and the way people just 'do it'. Her family loves to harvest and eat foods such as fish, fiddleheads, and stinging nettles. There is so much wealth in the land and yet people are going hungry NH has provided grants to communities to support traditional food use and knowledge sharing within communities.

Rosemary Plummer – Living in Vancouver but has spent time living in the north. Rosemary is realizing the value of everyone’s story and sees the huge potential of Indigenous peoples, and stresses the importance of hearing our voices. Rosemary has raised her own children to be committed to change, living on the land, learning the songs and the culture. Rosemary appreciated the discussion that happened at the BCFSN Gathering last summer (2014) where it was stressed that Indigenous people need accomplices that will be moved to change through action, rather than just an “ally”.

Muriel Victor is a member of the Cheam community in Sto:lo (People of the River) territory, and is the Manager for Health and Social Development in her community. She became passionate about traditional medicine and foods when she realized many were getting sicker from the medical systems. Muriel promotes traditional foods as being superior in nutrition compared to the Kraft dinner and chips that are making people sick. She is gaining experience harvesting things like red-clover will heal. She is upset and concerned about invasive weed species like Giant Hog-weed which is a very dangerous health hazard, and makes it hard to harvest traditional foods and medicines near Chilliwack lake. She is also concerned about the spraying of herbicides in traditional harvesting sites in the forests, and has witnessed toxins that fall out of the solution when making tinctures. Muriel’s niece Carrielynn Victor is teaching people how to recognize when an area has been sprayed and where we go to harvest the food and medicine. She is a warrior taking on the role of teaching forest agencies who put no thought into issues and are only concerned about extracting resources. Muriel also identified private property as a barrier to accessing traditional harvesting sites.

Cheryl Thomas – appreciates an education about where the spraying has happened, and learning protocol about where to pick berries and having sensitivity to encroachment in Indigenous territories. There was discussion about how Indigenous peoples do not think of our traditional foods as just a “non-timber forest product” . They are sacred and the term products robs us of all the rich and beautiful context and the way we relate to the land, plants and animals that provide us with our foods.

John McLeod travelled all the way from Salmon arm and came to the Gathering to learn about Indigenous food sovereignty. John is the President of the Shuswap Food Coop and works with 2 Directors Ruth Thomas and Mini Kenoras from the Neskonlith Secwepemc community. John actively works at getting Indigenous people on the Board of Director’s and feels that being an accomplice is a ‘fun’ thing. We are all in this together and we need to change the policies and the thinking. He is concerned about the politics underlying the large amount of food that gets thrown into land-fills every year, yet we still have hungry people. John recommends reading Thomas Kings book titled: An Inconvenient Indian - A Curious Account of Native Peoples in North America, and Naomi Klein’s book titled: This Changes Everything.

Action item: Dawn will follow up with John to discuss how I can serve to mentor the process of developing a Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty within the Shuswap Food Coop and Salmon Arm area.

Jeanie Parnell was present to provide an update of the work she has been doing to introduce and educate individuals and groups on the concept of Indigenous food sovereignty on the many steering

committees and boards of director's she works with in Prince Rupert and the northern communities. Jeannie lives and works away from her Dakelh territory and home community of Stellat'en. Jeannie's first interest in food security came from working with the Healthiest Babies Possible Program where she worked with the Nutritionist who made her more aware of what people in east Vancouver who rely on food banks. Jeannie worked since 2004 as the original founder of the Vancouver Native Health Society Urban Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden Project (now named Tu'wusht) here she was successful in securing 3 years of funding from the Vancouver Coastal Healthy Aboriginal Health Improvement Program to start the bringing Urban Aboriginal peoples living in the downtown eastside to UBC Farm to grow and prepare healthy food in a community approach. Jeannie references Dr. Nancy Turner and Elder Sophie Thomas who have both taught her a lot about ethno-botany around the province. Jeannie noted that Prince Rupert was celebrating Indigenous food sovereignty with the Salmonberry Trading Company Society who are passionate about local culture, food and crafts and wish to create a sustainable community and a strong local economy. Jeannie plants seeds of encouragement about local eating of the foods in the area of Prince Rupert, and has stepped up to fill one of the two seats being held for Indigenous peoples on the Steering Committee for the BC Food Systems Network.

Brent Director for the BC Food Systems Network is interested in learning to be an accomplice to Indigenous peoples both personally and organizationally and is looking forward to working with Dawn in capacity of a paid position I have been offered with the network.

Tammy Lea Meyer is a new affiliate with SENSORICA and sits on the board as co-chair of [CCEC Credit Union](#), and is President of [CCEC Development Society](#). Tammy is passionate about social change, economic justice, and creating something better in collaboration with others. Tammy is working with Natalia Campos to develop Media Monday and #myvoicematters, a democratic media experiment in personal agency. She attended the WGIFS meeting and Gathering to help us tell our own stories, and record and weave together the voices from Gathering participants and/or WGIFS members that carry the natural responses to interview questions below.

1Why is it important to promote the revitalization of traditional trade practices and protocols?

2What is the value of the WGIFS?

3What is the value of the BCFSN?

Tammy recorded several of the sessions in audio files and uploaded to this dropbox links for anyone who would like to listen. <https://www.dropbox.com/home/Dawn%20Morrison>

Sabina Dennis, Dakelh Voices of the Women Representative. Sabina stresses the need to recognize the animals, the plants, and the peoples of the land and respect the protocols of being in place. To save the earth we need to 'do' and just live off the land, to teach and take back our children instead of handing them to the government at 5 years of age. Focus on education of our children demonstrating that we have something more valuable than money. Sabina sang the Dakelh caribou song with deep reverence and power!

Sheila Erickson, Dakelh Elder – Sheila follows in her parents who were activists in the old days. She wants to teach the world the pot latch protocols where it's the rich guy who gives the most and walks away with nothing! It's the person who gives the most in traditional Dakelh potlatch who is held in highest social esteem and a position of power. In this tradition he/she can have power by owning nothing. Sheila challenges Jimmy Pattison and Oprah Winfrey to observe potlatch protocol. Nuclear families are being atomized, owning their own cars, lawn mowers and don't work and share with the community. The giving and the pot latch versus large scale economic greed is the paradox we need to transcend then the shift will happen. "We are all in it together and this is the only way to succeed".

Norine Messer, Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, Capacity Building Coordinator. Norine talks about the changes that are happening quickly and how we need to work together to adapt and change the way we do things. She states that working with the Nuuchahnulth peoples she has helped her understand more deeply the over-arching principle that "everything is one" and there is no separation between eco-systems and Indigenous food systems. If we assume inter-connection then we will understand that if you cut a tree it does have an impact. We cannot disregard this scientific fact and must learn to understand Indigenous reasoning. Harper government is not giving the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) a mandate to negotiate with Indigenous peoples and is taking people away from their food sources.

Norine worked with Nuuchahnulth community members who created experiential workshops to show DFO folks what 'life was like' prior to colonization, where everyone was given a role for the day. It provided participants with an experience of how people had to work together to trade with other families and community members, and explored the Aboriginal Title and Rights questions. The second part of the workshop, participants went through the process of colonization. The role playing process was very impactful and powerful. The workshop ended with a discussion on how can we all decolonize, work together to change the way DFO can help instead of turning a blind eye.